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THE
OLD OAK CHEST:

A TALE OF DOMESTIC LIFE.

BY

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AUTHOR OF

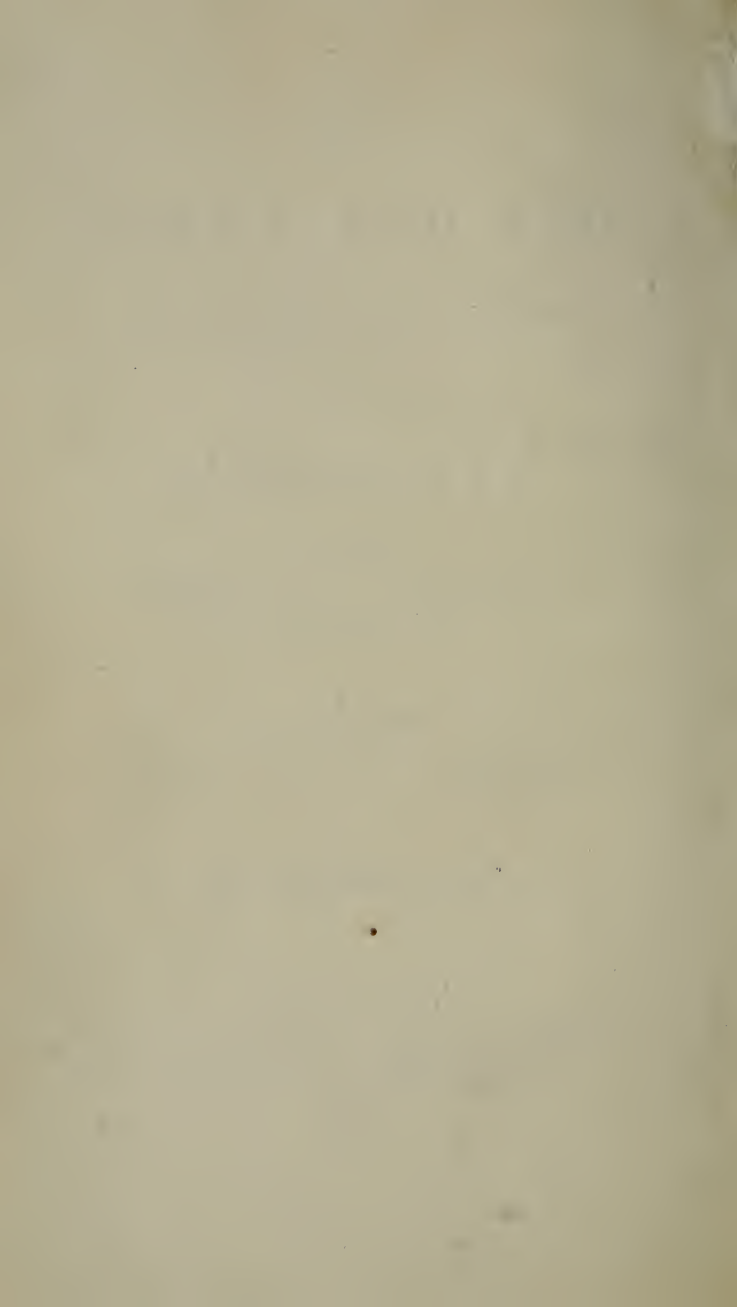
“THE GIPSY,” “THE FORGERY,”
“THE WOODMAN,” &c.

Even-handed justice
Commends the ingredients of our poison'd chalice
To our own lips. Shakespeare.

IN THREE VOLUMES.—VOL. II.

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THE

OLD OAK CHEST.

CHAPTER I.

TOM NOTBEAME was in one of his most silent moods when Mr. Greenshield returned to his house. Even monosyllables seemed difficult of utterance. His guest wanted information ; but he could get none, except in the very briefest form.

“ Is Mr. Henry Haldimand gone ? ” he asked.

Tom Notbeame nodded.

“ Is he coming back ? ” demanded Mr.

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Greenshield. "He passed me in a hack post-chaise ; and I suppose could not be going far."

Tom Notbeame shrugged his shoulders, but did not answer.

Mr. Greenshield retired to his room, changed his wet clothes, and then descended to the little parlour. He knew the character of the man he had to deal with well enough to feel sure that any attempt to make him speak in that mood would be fruitless ; and therefore he told the good woman, who acted as the worthy landlord's house-keeper, to bring him a glass of hot negus, and settled himself down to read some letters which had arrived for him during his absence.

After he had been thus employed for about three quarters of an hour, the landlord himself entered the room, and stood at the end of the table as if he wanted to say something. The fit had not entirely left him, however ; and Mr. Greenshield thought that a little assistance might be serviceable.

“ Well, Tom,” he said, “ what news is stirring ?”

Notbeame did not speak, but replied with a gesture indicating that he had nothing pleasant to communicate.

“ No bad news, I hope, at all events,” said Mr. Greenshield.

“ Bad or good, as it may be,” answered Tom Notbeame ; “ but it puzzles me—ay, there be many things puzzle me.”

“ Indeed !” said Mr. Greenshield. “ What may they be, Tom ? Perhaps I can resolve them from what you call my book-learning.

“ Some, but not all,” answered Tom Notbeame. “ I could put some hard things to you, Master Greenshield.”

“ Let us hear one of your sage problems,” said Mr. Greenshield, with a smile.

“ Well, then, why will a rogue continue to be a rogue, even when he does not find it answer ?” asked Tom Notbeame.

“ Because the two strongest things on earth are nature and habit,” replied Mr. Greenshield ; “ and both combine to keep him as he began.”

“ Humph !” said the landlord. “ There’s some reason in that. Now for another. Why should a gentleman—quite a gentleman, I do believe—go about under another name than his own, and not like to meet people, for fear he should be found out ?”

He looked full at Mr. Greenshield as he spoke ; but that gentleman remained perfectly composed, and replied at once,

“ Probably because he has reasons which he does not choose to tell, except to the proper people at the proper time. Now, Tom, for another.”

“ There’s something in that,” said the landlord. “ So I’ll ask you for a piece of advice. Is it proper to tell a gentleman when one thinks any thing is going wrong, unless one is quite sure ?”

Mr. Greenshield paused long over this question, and at last answered,

“ That must depend upon circumstances. You are putting what is evidently a particular question, in such general terms that one cannot give you a reply which would be at all serviceable.”

“ Well then, sir,” said Tom Notbeame, “ if I saw a person whom I knew to be a pickpocket, standing close to your coat-tails, should I tell you he was going to pick your pocket, when I couldn’t prove it ?”

Mr. Greenshield mused for a moment, and then answered,

“ No, I think not. If you wished very much to serve me, you would watch him carefully, to see that he did not put his hands in my pockets, and if he did, catch hold of him, or cry ‘ Stop thief ! ’ ”

“ Well, so I will,” answered Tom Notbeame. “ That is good advice, too, though difficult to follow. But if I did the other thing, I might have more speaking than I could well manage. I never was fond of speaking much ; and tell-tales always do mischief, whether they have had any hand in the thing or not :

' Quoth Sir John Cockle, I'll pledge you a pottle,
Were it the best ale in Nottinghamshire :
But then, said our King, I do think of a thing,
Some of your lightfoot I would we had here.
Ho, ho ! quoth Richard, full well I may say it,
'Tis knavery to eat it, and then to bewray it.' "

With this quotation, Tom was turning to quit the room, when Mr. Greenshield called him back, saying,

" Come, come, Tom, I have done my best to solve *your* questions ; now you must solve *mine*. Do you know any thing of Mr. Henry Haldimand's proceedings ? Is he likely to return to Haldistow, or is he gone from the neighbourhood ? "

" He's gone," answered Tom. " When he may come back, I cannot tell ; but it won't be yet awhile. "

" Have you your information from good authority ? " asked Mr. Greenshield.

" Himself," answered Tom.

" Then did you see him before he went ? " inquired the guest.

"No, after he went," answered Tom; and with great difficulty, seeing that the information would be extracted from him sooner or later, he proceeded thus: "He turned back after he set out, came round by the Hall road, wrote a letter here, asked me to give it to Sir John's own hand, or put it where he'd be sure to get it, and then went away again."

"Where is he gone?" asked Mr. Greenshield.

"To Dingle," answered Tom Notbeame; and, looking him full in the face, he added, "He knows something, depend upon it."

Mr. Greenshield's brow became clouded; but it seemed more with melancholy than anxiety, and he replied,

"And *you* know something, Tom, it appears—more than I thought."

"I have known all from the first," answered Tom Notbeame; "but I hold my tongue—it's the best plan, when things are going right."

"It is," answered Mr. Greenshield; "and

I think you are wise, especially when such a wild, unsteady youth is concerned."

"He's better than his father, I think," said Tom Notbeame. "I don't think so ill of him as I did. He's a coxcomb, and made the room smell of stinks that they call perfumes, till I was obliged to have all the windows and doors opened to let them out. I wouldn't ride in that postchaise for the next month for a dollar a day. But he's got some heart, I think."

"God send it," said Mr. Greenshield. "He ought to have it by one side of the house; but he has got what we fishermen call a drop of the devil's blood in him from the other; and he has not had an education to remove it. And now, Tom, I shall go to bed. Would that the lad's training had been entrusted to me. I think something might have been made out of his disposition, wayward as it always was; but if there be anything on earth that injures a child, it is alternate harshness and indulgence, liberality and parsimony, threats unfulfilled, and punishments undeserved."

He rose to go as he spoke; but Tom Notbeame ventured to put in a word ere he departed.

“Don’t you think he might mend if you took him in hand now, sir?” he inquired.

“In vain,” answered Mr. Greenshield, abruptly, and left the room.

The next morning passed quietly enough at Haldistow; and, at the exact hour appointed, Mr. Greenshield walked through the gate of the rectory garden and approached the house. Be it remarked that I say he walked, although a sultry day, acting upon a sandy soil, had dried up all the rain of the preceding evening, and left the road dusty, as the visitor’s shoes bore witness. Moreover, a postchaise was easily to be procured in the village of Haldistow; and Tom Notbeame himself, at this period of his life, boasted of a gig, or two-wheeled chaise, which he let out for the convenience of travellers. Mr. Greenshield, however, had his own particular views; and he

usually followed them; but it must not be supposed that he could not afford the gig or the postchaise, if he had liked it; nor that he was stingy and parsimonious; for he had given a poor woman, the wife of a drunken idler, two guineas to buy baby-clothes not five minutes before, as he passed through the village. It was simply that Mr. Greenshield liked to walk; and he did walk. He rang the bell under the porch, and before the servant had appeared, put one foot upon the seat at the side, and then the other, brushed the dirt accurately off each shoe and black silk stocking (no one wore trowsers and boots in an evening in those days) and was as trim and neat by the time the door was opened, as if he had just come out of a band-box. Mr. Richard Haldimand expressed himself, and really was, glad to see him. Colonel Haldimand shook him warmly by the hand; and Mrs. Haldimand received him, as she did all her husband's friends, kindly and courteously. In less than three minutes, Mr. Greenshield

was perfectly at home in the house where he had never been before, and sitting by Mrs. Haldimand on the sofa, was talking to her with all the ease of an old acquaintance, about various parish matters with which—although she was as good a clergyman's wife as ever lived—he was fully as well acquainted as herself.

They were speaking of the poor in the neighbourhood ; and just as Sir John's carriage rolled up to the door, Mrs. Haldimand said, with a sigh,

“They are, sometimes, very difficult to deal with.”

“True,” replied Mr. Greenshield. “Such is the case ; for we are obliged to shape our conduct to suit many different dispositions if we would do any good at all. Nevertheless, I think we are more often disappointed in this, as in other things, from our exaggerated expectations than from the stubbornness of men or circumstances. It is a mere dream of the poet that anything ever can be found—

‘Adorning for the eye of gods and men
The passions, actions, habitudes of life,
And rendering earth, like heaven, a sacred place
Where love and praise may take delight to dwell.’

All we can hope for is to render men somewhat better ; and I have found in a little village a good way off, which is under my own eye, that one of the best human means is to have little periodical festivals where, without any display of judgment, good conduct is naturally and easily rewarded, and bad conduct punished. We give a dinner and trifling prizes twice in the year to old and young of the poorer classes. Any bad conduct is exclusion altogether from our next meeting ; and good conduct is sure to get a prize. The first year I found that two of my prizes given to people from whom I expected better, were actually sold to obtain drink. It was a great disappointment.”

“And what did you do ?” inquired Mrs. Haldimand.

At that moment, Sir John and Kate entered the room ; and some minutes elapsed before the subject could be renewed ; but then Mrs. Haldimand repeated her question, explaining to her brother-in-law how it arose.

“ What I did,” replied Mr. Greenshield, “ was very simple. Both the persons could read ; and I wrote down in plain terms what they had done, explained in very few words what I thought of it, announced to them that they would not be received at the next meeting, and expressed a hope that their conduct would justify me in admitting them on a subsequent occasion. One was exceedingly penitent, owned his error, and promised reformation. The other was headstrong, said there was no use of his getting a prize if he might not do what he liked with it, and was drunk for a whole week to show his independence. By his very bravadoes, however, he made my deter-

mination widely known through the whole place, and was thus, against his will, of real service. Our next meeting was on a beautiful summer's day on the green. I had taken no farther notice of the two men whatever, except by giving a little encouragement to the one who seemed penitent. Of course, they did not appear amongst the rest ; but I saw them both watching the merry scene at a distance. To the humbler of the two I sent a message, telling him to come to my house that night. The other I left to his own reflections ; and they were salutary ; for now at the end of five years there is not a better man in the parish. For the former I cannot say so much ; seeing that his faults are those of weakness, which I find the most difficult to deal with. However, he has never been excluded since, and is, I think, decidedly better conducted than if he had no inducement continually before his eyes to behave well."

Mrs. Haldimand looked at Mr. Greenshield's coat to see if he were a clergyman ; but it was of a dark brown.

This little tale gave rise to a good deal of discussion between the elder persons of the party before dinner was announced. Some difficulties and objections were started ; but on those subjects, as on most others, Mr. Greenshield had clear and precise notions which, whether right or wrong, had been formed upon careful reasoning, and confirmed by some experience. They were always announced with great modesty, and in a pleasant, quiet way ; and he wound up the whole as they went in to dinner, by saying, with a laugh—

“ I once knew petty pilfering banished altogether from a large estate in Ireland by a fiddle and a barrel of beer. The proprietor was a man of known determination ; and he announced that, so long as nothing was lost in the course of a year, all the cotters and labourers should have a merry harvest-home ; but the

moment anything was taken, and the culprit not detected, the fiddle should cease, and the beer no longer flow."

The evening passed away with calm and happy cheerfulness. Men in those days were accustomed to drink much wine, and to sit long after dinner ; but such was not the habit of any one there, although they were by no means professed water drinkers. Mr. Greenshield was an object of interest and attention to all, merely in his quality of a stranger in a place where strangers were seldom seen. We are all more or less pedlars in society carrying about a stock of mental goods for exchange with others. Now Mr. Greenshield's box was very well supplied, and full of a number of rarities and valuable articles which did not often find their way into the society in the neighbourhood of Haldistow. Every moment he won more and more both on Sir John and Kate ; and to the former his conversation was peculiarly valuable and interesting ; for the powerful and superior

mind of the old baronet was left during great part of the year without any interchange of thought upon subjects of much importance with intellect and experience equal to his own.

The evening did not conclude without an invitation from Sir John Haldimand to his new acquaintance ; and it was accepted too.

“ See the end of all my good resolutions,” said Mr. Greenshield, with a smile. “ I came down here determined to live in perfect privacy and retirement, to enjoy my fishing, to read my book, never to dine out of my inn, and to guard myself carefully against all the seductions of society ; but at the very first temptation I yield, as if I had no strength of mind or character whatever.”

“ If you exercise any such strength of mind upon us, Mr. Greenshield, I will not easily forgive you,” said Kate, gaily. “ I have twenty things I want you to see, and to talk to you about. I am sure you can give me

advice upon everything from the construction of a green-house to the management of a school."

"On those two points, I may know something," said Mr. Greenshield; "but there is a wide tract, my dear young lady, between them, and beyond them on every side, in which I should very much fear to act as guide to any one, except along certain beaten paths where there is no chance of my leading them into error. However, I will do my best; and if you are stout-hearted and do not fear, perhaps we may find our way through any maze which you may think fit to explore. But now I will take my departure, and walk home to my quiet little room by the Mere."

It was not one visit Mr. Greenshield made to Haldistow Hall, nor to the rectory; nor was it one visit that Sir John Haldimand made to Tom Notbeame's lodger.

Mr. Greenshield became his frequent companion, his adviser upon many things, his friend, in fact. Nor was he less in

favour with Kate. His conversation had always something new in it, and always something pleasant. It seemed to enlarge her mind and to direct her thoughts ; and, though always decided, and sometimes a little cutting, there was beneath all a vein of kindness and goodness, which daily won upon her esteem.

He saw her school, which Sir John left entirely to her own management ; and he suggested several alterations and improvements which turned out most beneficial. He was as much at home in her greenhouse ; could tell her the culture and habits of every plant, suggested additions, and gave her information with regard to discoveries which had not then found their way so far into the country. Nay, more. One day there arrived by the carrier a number of cases of exotics, now common enough, but then exceedingly rare, as a gift from their new acquaintance to Miss Haldimand. He had brought the seeds and the plants, he told her, from foreign

countries, and had succeeded in rearing them without difficulty in England.

Often in this way he referred to his wanderings over other lands ; and although Sir John, judging of him by all he saw, and by the constant and unvarying course of his ideas, was perfectly satisfied, and hardly entertained a wish to know any more of the previous life of his new acquaintance, Kate, with a little natural curiosity, would fain have heard his story—for she was sure there was one—and have learned what had led him so far and wide over the earth's surface, now to Asia, now to the Cape, now to Mexico, now to many a country of Europe. But upon all such subjects Mr. Greenshield's lips were sealed ; and it was only by a passing allusion to things which he had seen here or there, that he ever referred to the incidents of his previous life

Often would Mr. Greenshield speak of his approaching departure ; but still he lingered on, and protracted his sojourn at

Tom Notbeame's week after week, long beyond the usual period of his stay. The reader, however, must not think that no other events chequered the calm course of life at Haldistow during the three months which intervened between the middle of April and the middle of July. Several occurrences happened of importance to this tale : some affecting the principal personages covertly and indirectly, and one at least touching them all more nearly, and rendering the society of their new acquaintance (such as I have described it) the greatest possible comfort to them.

These things however must be kept apart lest I should tangle the threads of my history.

CHAPTER II.

AT the distance of about fifteen miles from Haldistow was a small country town which returned one member to parliament in those good old much-abused days when what are called rotten boroughs afforded representation to many interests now totally unrepresented, and a means of entering the senate, without enormous expense either of fraud, lying, or money, to many of the most distinguished law-givers and statesmen of England. This small town was populous in comparison with its size, but not very wealthy. It had no great men in it, no rich citizens, no ponderous aldermen. The man of most importance in the place was

the lawyer ; for he set all people to rights, knew the business of all, could tell to a shilling what they were worth, and yet was a very secret and tolerably well disposed person. He drew all the leases for the neighbouring gentry, collected rents for many of them, and yet did not even attempt to ruin them. He wrote forms of agreements amongst the townspeople, and did not endeavour to set them by the ears. He acted as clerk to the magistrates of the district, supplied the bench in general with law and common sense, and rather mitigated the severity of rural Catos than aggravated it by any suggestions of his own. He used a great deal of parchment, much paper and red tape, had a pet barrister as a counsel in London, and was a good customer of the stamp office. In fact, he was the pink of country attorneys.

This is all episodical ; for in this chapter I do not know that we shall have anything to do with the lawyer. I do not indeed speak with certainty ; for, as Blackstone

kindly and delicately insinuates, no man can ever tell when he may find the fangs of the English law in his haunches. Be he as meek as Moses, let him renounce litigation like a quaker, let him be soft as a dormouse and insinuating as a ferret, still he is never safe from that great ubiquitous demon, the English law.

I won't say a word of the parson and the doctor. Nay, nor of the silk mercer, though he was the next greatest man in the town to the lawyer. He was eloquent too, God wot, and proposed or seconded the nomination of candidates for parliament who had been previously nominated to him by the patron of the borough. He always proposed the person he was told to propose "on public grounds," and had great skill in making the grounds. But this was his utmost approach to the character of a patriot—reformers being unknown in those days; the only reformers the people had ever heard of were the devil and Martin Luther; and, as they flattered

themselves these two lived long ago, they gave themselves very little trouble about them, except on Sundays, when the parson told them a good deal about both.

I have got off the track ; and, not to wander any longer, let me say a word of the town itself. It was situated on a river like most other towns, and was not exactly, as some towns have been described, at the bottom of a punch-bowl, but rather at the bottom of a soup-plate ; for the hills which surrounded it were not much higher in proportion than the rim of a porringer. Four streets had the town, entering upon the four sides of the market place, two of them narrow and two of them broad. The broad ones, had it not been for the market place which separated them, might have been considered as one continuous street ; and down it the high road passed. Now the reader may naturally suppose that, as along this road the mail passed every day, and travellers, whether on horseback, in carriages or post-chaises,

rattled by it towards the end of their journey, as eke the waggons with their broad wheels rolled over it, with carriers' carts to boot—the reader, I say, might naturally suppose that the Silver Cross, *i.e.*, the great inn of the place, would have been situated either on one side of this street or the other. The first deviser of the inn, when an inn became necessary, might well have pitched upon a large house at the corner of the market-place, or he might have built an edifice close to the bridge. But no, he had views of his own ; and he preferred a back street, and a small one, to the open thoroughfare. It was inconvenient to coachmen postilions and travellers ; but the worthy landlord did not care a straw ; for he was well aware that no horses could be procured within ten miles on either side of him ; and so he kept to his own way without caring for the convenience of others. What were his motives, no one ever discovered ; although, as he was a shrewd money-making man, people imagined that

the price of the large old house he bought in that situation, had a good deal to do with the matter. It did not amount to more than one third of what he would have been called upon to pay for a building of equal extent in the High Street ; and he screwed the seller down to the lowest possible point by asserting that he must pull the old house down and build up a new one in its place. He never did so, however, when he had got it, but patched and repaired so economically and judiciously that, at a very trifling expense, he made it habitable for the next hundred years.

The edifice was, probably, an ancient manor house or some old municipal building, large, roomy, rambling, with gable ends turned to the street, the first floor with its wide windows projecting, at least, two feet over the ground-floor with its little windows, as if to shut out all possible light from the parlours and halls below. Through the centre was a great archway,

with a shield sculptured on the key-stone, which might have said with the old soldier, that it had once borne arms but had long laid them down ; for not a trace of heraldic ornament was now visible on the crumbling stone. The court-yard was somewhat irregular and full of windows ; but, nevertheless, it had a gloomy, solemn look about it. So that one might have expected in any of the long corridors and passages around, to meet with a ghost, had it not been for the substantial and very mundane-looking establishment of waggons, carts, chaises, horses, waiters and ostlers, which were generally to be seen in the open space. Paint had been very much spared for many years upon the building ; and no very great pains were taken to remove straw, turnips, carrots and occasional cabbage-leaves, from the court-yard. There, too, dwelt a pig in hourly danger of losing its life by the dashing of vehicles through the archway, and receiving, with a grunt of defiance, the bastinadoes of the

chamber-maids and the kicks of the ostler. He had very little society, but sometimes was favoured with the company of a goat in leisure moments, though the dwelling and principal occupation of the latter lay amongst the stables behind. When the two got together, though they agreed tolerably well upon general principles, there were occasional disputes in regard to particular articles, not of faith but of diet ; and these quarrels were generally settled much in the same way as we see many a debate conducted in the House of Commons, the one party making a fierce attack with the head, and the other opposing with the dead weight of the *vis inertię*. The scene often afforded amusement to the sojourners of the house, though it must be confessed that the united smell of the combatants was not like that of musk and ambergris.

About eight o'clock on an evening early in May, the pig and the goat, after consorting for some time with decent civility in the courtyard, had come to an open

rupture, and the latter had butted his short-legged, fat-sided companion into the archway. Just at that moment, a postchaise rattled down the street and dashed through the entrance of the inn. Pigs never like to do anything on compulsion; and, besides, this pig was between two fires. So that, swearing he would not get out of the way of any postchaise in Europe, the fat gentleman ran right under the horses' feet. The postboy was nearly thrown, and his horse nearly down; but the impetus with which the vehicle went was great; the wheel caught the porker on the chine, laid him flat, and mounted over him with a jerk which threw the side of the chaise with a violent shock against the stonework of the archway, in the midst of some most tremendous squealing.

It was evident that these shrieks were porcine, and came from under the carriage, not from out of it. Nevertheless, a gentleman who was standing close by, in what newspaper reporters, in the case of a man

going to be hanged, call “ a suit of decent black,” seemed greatly apprehensive for the denizen of the chaise, and, starting forward with alacrity, he aided to right the vehicle which would have been over but for the wall ; and, before waiters or landlord could appear, had opened the door, exclaiming—

“ Dear me, sir, I hope you are not hurt !”

“ No, Matthew, no,” replied a voice—
“ shaken somewhat more than convenient, but not hurt. Come back in an hour, and I will talk with you. I have not dined yet.”

By this time, a gentleman had descended from the vehicle, and the landlord had come out with bows and salutations. Mr. William Haldimand was ushered up a broad oak staircase leading to a long, wide corridor, black with age, and was conducted to a small, neat sitting-room, where candles were instantly lighted, and his orders taken. Those orders, in regard to dinner, were executed with more promptitude and pro-

priety than the appearance of the place might have led one to imagine. A very neat, well-cooked, and somewhat tasteful dinner was set before him in a few minutes ; and Mr. Haldimand dined and drank somewhat more than a pint of wine, not only in profound silence, but in profound thought. He then took some green tea, and was disposing of the second or third cup, when the landlord himself entered to announce that some one wished to speak with his guest.

"Show him in," said Mr. Haldimand, without asking whether it was man or woman ; and the next instant Mr. Matthew Hush stood before him.

"Well, Matthew," said Mr. Haldimand, looking at him through his spectacles, "you have got over punctually."

"Of course, sir, I obeyed at once," replied Mr. Hush ; "but I was in a terrible fright about that accident just now. I thought you might be hurt."

"Poo, poo," said Mr. Haldimand, with

a slightly contemptuous smile, at the very thought of the tender interest taken in his welfare by Mr. Matthew Hush. "What excuse did you make to get over?"

"I wanted particularly to see my aunt, sir, whom I had not seen for so many years, you know," replied Mr. Hush, with a slight twinkle of the eye.

"Have you an aunt?" demanded Mr. Haldimand.

"I had once, sir," replied Matthew Hush; "but she died very unexpectedly, poor lady!" And again his eye twinkled with subdued fun.

"Take care you are not found out," replied Mr. Haldimand. "Your relations at Haldistow must know that you have no aunt here."

"Oh, dear no, they don't, sir," answered the worthy butler. "She was my father's sister, and hated so heartily all the people at Haldistow that she took care they should hear nothing of her for the last twenty years. Besides, I was very cautious, sir;

and Sir John gave me a good opportunity; for, when I asked leave, he said "Ay, is the poor old woman living still?" I answered that I could not tell; for I had not heard of her for some time. So that is all secure, sir. I am very cautious."

"I know that," said Mr. Haldimand, drily; and he then added thoughtfully, "I find these people of the inn recollect me, which is inconvenient. If my brother John hears of my being here, he may suspect that you came over to see me."

"I don't think that, sir," replied Matthew Hush. "He doesn't seem given to suspect people. However, it will be better for me to tell him about it at once, than for him to find it out. I can lay the meeting upon piggie."

"What do you mean, sir?" demanded Mr. Haldimand.

"I mean upon the accident to the chaise, sir," replied Matthew Hush. "I can tell him how I saw a chaise upset against the wall by running over a pig,

and how I hurried up and opened the door, and found you inside ; and how very much surprised I was.”.

“ It may be as well,” said Mr. Haldimand, after a moment’s thought ; “ but at all events, you must return the first thing to-morrow morning ; and I will contrive some business to settle here, which will reach his ears, and account for my coming. —Now to other matters. I did not choose to answer your letter fully in writing ; for these things are better confined to private conversation.” (Matthew Hush thought not. He liked documentary evidence in some cases). “ You tell me,” continued Mr. Haldimand, “ that you have discovered the particulars of my brother’s will ; but I want to hear more of the details. Do you mean to say that he has left this girl the Haldistow estate ?”

“ It is more than probable, sir,” replied Matthew Hush, who did not wish to commit himself too far.

“ More than probable !” repeated Mr. Haldimand. “ What I want is certainty.”

“ That can only be obtained by looking at the will itself, sir,” replied Mr. Hush ; “ but I said it was more than probable, because, you see, I heard Lady Martindale pressing her son in regard to the marriage, and telling him what a fine thing it would be to unite the Haldistow property to their own. She said she had just been talking with Sir John, and knew all about his will.”

“ Then did the young man seem unwilling for the match ?” asked Mr. Haldimand.

“ O, no, sir,” answered Matthew Hush. “ He was very much in love. That was clear. The young lady’s illegitimacy seemed to be the only obstacle ; and that, her ladyship seemed to think, was no great matter if they secured the estates.”

“ Ah, woman, mercenary woman !” exclaimed Mr. Haldimand ; and Matthew Hush laughed internally at Mammon crying out upon Covetousness.

“ And so that old virago, Giles, con-

firmed the tale, did she ?” said Mr. Haldimand.

“Sofar assaying that the young lady would have everything Sir John could leave,” replied Mr. Hush, “and that she had witnessed the will.”

“Then the case is clear,” said Mr. Haldimand ; “and there is no remedy for it.”

Matthew Hush was silent. He began to think he had gone a little too far—that his beloved master would give up the business in despair, and might perhaps in his disappointment adapt a cravat to his (Matthew Hush’s) throat, of somewhat too stringent a character. He only ventured to say, however :

“Would it not be better, sir, to look at the will ?”

“Why, what good would that do ?” asked Mr. Haldimand, who was in reality leading the man on to speak more plainly.

“Why, sir, if you found the arrangements disagreeable,” said Mr. Hush, “I

think means might be taken to remedy the evil at the proper moment."

"Well then, take them, take them," said Mr. Haldimand, in a quick, nonchalant manner.

Such vague injunctions, however, did not suit Mr. Hush's purpose at all ; and he replied with an air of the most profound respect :

"I must have your directions, sir ; and, for fear I should commit any error, I should much wish to have them in writing."

This was jumping across the Rubicon at a bound ; and Mr. Haldimand set his teeth hard, and gave him, according to a phrase in vogue, a withering frown. It did not wither Matthew Hush in the slightest degree however. He was driving his bargain ; and the more he saw that his opponent was eager, the more strongly he entrenched himself.

Mr. Haldimand saw that he must speak as well as frown—that it was now come to the point which he had expected, not

without doubt and embarrassment ; and gazing at Matthew Hush through his spectacles with a bitter sneer upon his lip, he said, without any of the execrations in which he occasionally indulged, and in a low, considerate tone :

“ You knave and scoundrel ! Do you expect me to put myself in the power of such a *worthy* person ? You will find yourself most bitterly deceived, let me tell you. Now, mark me well,” he continued raising his voice. “ You are quite capable of taking a hint when it is given to you, if you please to do so. Upon your doing so now, you will be good enough to remark, depends this pleasant alternative—your going to the gallows, or your receiving one thousand pounds.”

“ I would rather have the thousand pounds,” said Mr. Hush, with the most imperturbable effrontery ; “ and I am quite ready to take a hint if you will deliver it, sir, with your usual distinctness.”

“So be it,” said Mr. Haldimand. “First, then, I am desirous of knowing the exact contents of my brother’s will ; and then—” He paused for a moment or two as if he found a difficulty in uttering that which was in his mind. “And then,” he said, at length, “if he have really and truly left the Haldistow estate to this bastard daughter of his, I would have the unjust act cancelled.”

The last few words were spoken slowly and deliberately, in a low tone, but with strong emphasis ; and then he added, rapidly and sharply—

“Of the how and the when, I would know nothing. It must be effectually done, and at the proper moment You are capable of doing it—you have already sketched out in your mind the whole plan and mode of proceeding ; and if you do it not, woe be to you.”

“But indeed, sir, you are rather hard upon me,” said Matthew Hush. “Pray

remember, this is a terrible and perilous task ; and without you put down your directions in writing, I have no security."

Some men, quite as bad as Mr. William Haldimand, might have replied that he had the security of their *honour* ; but he scorned all small and unavailing hypocrisy ; and he replied at once,

" You have the security of my *interest*. Do you think I will suffer a doubt to be brought of the validity of my title ? As to the peril, let me remind you that you stand there in danger of being hanged whenever I please ; for I have taken all the necessary precautions to insure that a little delay be no impediment. You can be no worse than you are, let you do what you will."

" True, sir. That is one of the bounties of the law," said Mr. Hush, in a philosophical tone. " When a man has once committed a great crime, it gives him every encouragement to commit a great many more ; and it, and society together, render

it utterly impossible for man or woman to repent, and be saved. But I see you are impatient, sir ; and I comprehend the force of your arguments. What you require shall be done, if I can contrive to remain in the service of Sir John Haldimand long enough to effect it."

"If you do not, it will be through your own fault that you lose the opportunity," replied Mr. Haldimand, sternly. "My brother never parts with his servants, except for some serious offence."

This involuntary testimony to his brother's sense of justice and kindness struck even Matthew Hush. Accustomed as he was to look upon everything in the worst point of view, he could not help drawing a comparison between the man before him, and the man whom he was now instigated to deceive and betray, which was very disadvantageous to the former. The grasp was still upon his neck, however ; and he replied with his usual sincerity—

“Then I shall stay there for ever ; for I shall take especial care, sir, to give him no real cause of offence. It is my duty to you, sir, as well as to him.”

“Which, if it depended upon nothing but *duty*,” said Mr. Haldimand, “you would perform equally well to both. I wish you would recollect, Hush, that such cant has no effect upon me.”

“Well, sir, you are hard upon me,” exclaimed Hush, with a slight touch of virtuous indignation. “I declare I am quite ready to do all you tell me, and I do think I deserve some praise for the great progress I have made already. It may be an easy matter enough to impose upon Mr. Richard ; but it is a different thing to come round Sir John, and at one time I thought I never should manage it. However, in the course of a very few weeks—a very few days indeed—I have not only done that ; but I have obtained all the information that you seemed at first to want, sir, and have worked myself so far into the good graces

of old Mrs. Giles that I can get a hint from her whenever it is needed. That was no easy matter either, sir, I can tell you."

"You are skilful, you are skilful, Matthew," said Mr. Haldimand, with a sneering smile. "I never found fault with your skill. You certainly do deserve credit for what you have done, and depend upon it whatever you do for me shall be well rewarded—not from gratitude, understand me, for that is all trash ; but as a matter of barter. *You serve me, I pay you ;* and you serve me again in hope of the same payment."

"Why, sir, speaking of payment," said Matthew Hush, in an easy tone, "I should like to have a little something in hand. Besides all my exertions, I have been put to some charges ; and I am very poor just now. My journey down was an expensive one ; and you know it was taken altogether in your service."

"Had you staid in London your next journey would have been cheaper," said

Mr. Haldimand, drily. "It costs a man little to go to Newgate, and less from the condemned cell to the gallows. Poor, are you? What have you done with all that you have received and pilfered from me?"

"Why, sir, I must have my little pleasures," said Mr. Hush, without at all attempting to deny the pilfering; "and I do think that my services already—"

"Require some reward," said Mr. Haldimand, taking out his pocket-book. "There is something for you;" and he handed him a bank note.

Matthew Hush took it, looked at the old Gothic word in the corner, saw that the value was ten pounds, called Mr. William Haldimand in his heart a niggardly scoundrel, and thanked him with every appearance of satisfaction.

The exercise of generosity, like the *ingenuas artes*, softens the manners; and Mr. Haldimand, believing himself to have been very liberal, whatever Matthew Hush might think, greatly unbent. The con-

versation went on for about half an hour longer, and became more free and confidential. Mr. Haldimand talked, and suffered Matthew Hush to talk, of all the means and appliances which he intended to bring to bear for the purpose of carrying out the object in view, and about which he had declared his wish to hear nothing. Thus, when at length the worthy butler took his leave, Mr. Haldimand was perfectly aware of the construction of a false key to the large oak chest containing his brother's private papers, and moreover suspected very much that the worthy Matthew—though he denied it stoutly—had employed that key to obtain the information he already possessed. They parted, however, very good friends ; Mr. Haldimand believing that he had not committed himself in the slightest degree, and that Matthew Hush would perform his bidding without obtaining the slightest hold upon him, while Matthew Hush walked out of the room with the firm determination of making his

worthy employer's behests serve his own purposes, and free him from the terrible grasp of Mr. Haldimand.

When Matthew Hush assured his master that he must have his little pleasures, he did but do himself justice ; and, to say the truth, it was his taste for these little pleasures which had led him into some peculiarities of conduct rather dangerous to himself and detrimental to others. Some men fall into vice and even into crime from a morbid love of excitement or a spirit of adventure. Curiosity tempts others to try all that life can afford. Others are led on by strong and ungovernable passions ; but in none of these cases was Mr. Matthew Hush. As he would have expressed it himself, he was a man of peculiarly delicate tastes, which, as the reader well knows, are somewhat expensive in indulgence. In other words he had a strong and ungovernable appetite for all the good things of life ; and probity was no bar to his seeking the means of obtain-

ing them. Along several of the roads which he followed in pursuit of these little pleasures, as he called them, it does not become us to follow him ; but we may dwell for a moment upon one. The great gastronomic art had its charms for him, and was more safely indulged in than the smiles of a Milwood, so that he rather preferred it of the two. Accordingly, when he quitted the sitting room of Mr. William Haldimand, he intimated to mine host of the Silver Cross, where he proposed to take up his lodging for the night, that he should like a nice little delicate bit of supper. That which was most readily prepared was a dish of pork cutlets ; and although he had some doubts of their digestibility, the fragrant odour which they emitted on being put on the table overcame prudence ; and he attacked them at once although there was a broiled fowl and mushrooms, technically termed in the sister island a spatch-cock, served up at the same time. He could not resist tasting a bit of

the fowl also for the sake of the mushrooms, consoling himself with the notion that a few glasses of good wine would set all to rights. The decanter was full when it came in, and was empty when he took up his candle to retire to rest.

There are some men, and Mr. Hush was one of them, who are not exhilarated by the effect of wine ; and, like the German writer, Hoffman, Mr. Hush became rather depressed under its influence. He grew more fanciful, it is true ; but his fancies were of a dark and gloomy nature. Thus, as he walked up the old oak staircase and through the long ghastly corridor I have mentioned, with the windows all closed and the dingy panelling only lighted by the faint beams of the candle he carried in his hand, he felt nervous at, he knew not what. He thought of hanging, and being hanged. The carved mouldings of the wainscot looked like ropes ; and the door-posts and lintels took the shape of gibbets. Had any one appeared suddenly at that moment,

fancy would have transformed him into a hangman ; and a suddenly opening door made him start as if a thief-taker were behind him. Twice he called himself a fool ; and, knowing the exact particulars of his own case, he was well aware that nothing but sleep would restore him to his usual comfortable confidence. He accordingly made haste to his room at the end of the corridor, threw off his clothes, and jumped into bed, leaving the candle on the table to burn itself out in the socket. As much was not left of it, it soon accomplished that feat ; but before it was extinguished Matthew Hush was asleep. How he dreamed that night it is impossible to describe, so wild, so varied, so fantastic were the images presented to his mind in slumber. Hangmen and opera-dancers, prisons and palaces, diamond rings and iron fetters, gold snuff boxes and judges' wigs, were all jumbled strangely up together. Once he had Mr. William Haldimand sitting on his stomach with the knees bent up to the chin and gazing at him through his spectacles. Then again a

demon was pulling him by the nose with a pair of red-hot tongs ; and then a phantom-hand spread out before him, for miles and miles, an infernal sheet of parchment written all over in gigantic characters LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT. At the same time, a voice distinctly exclaimed,

“ Matthew Hush, Matthew Hush ! Are not you a precious rascal, Matthew Hush ? ”

He could bear the agony no more. The bonds of sleep were broken ; and up he started in his bed, gazing wildly on the blank darkness surrounding him.

There certainly *was* an extraordinary noise. He knew not well whether he was sleeping or waking ; but yet he heard distinctly a rattling, scraping sort of clatter close to his door ; and again a voice exclaimed—

“ Are not you a precious rascal to come here in this way ? ”

For a moment, he sat and trembled in every limb ; but then, as the bewilderment of sleep and the agitation of his dreams

passed away, courage and sense returned ; and with them came rage. Jumping at once out of bed, he rushed towards the corridor, knocked over a chair and washstand, and threw open the door. The instant that he did so, an intolerable smell assailed him ; and the next moment he received an awful blow in the stomach, which cast him back senseless on the floor.

Matthew Hush did not hear it ; but, immediately after this catastrophe, the voice of Mr. William Haldimand exclaimed from a door at some distance—

“ In the name of Heaven, what is all that noise about ? ”

“ Only the goat, sir,” said another voice out of the darkness. “ We’ll get him down in a minute.” And then followed a low, chuckling laugh, and a renewed scraping and tramping of horny feet.

When Matthew Hush returned to consciousness, the goat was gone ; and the landlord and one of the ostlers were stand-

ing by him. He felt himself severely bruised about the chest and stomach ; and the good man of the house was anxious to send for a doctor ; but Matthew would on no account consent ; and, although he felt much as if he had been trodden on by a mob, he resolutely set out for Haldistow in a gig by daybreak on the following morning.

He had some thought, as he was about to leave the inn, of telling the landlord to put down his expenses to the account of Mr. William Haldimand ; but, recollecting that that gentleman was in rather an irritable mood and having had his natural courage somewhat cowed by his late adventure, he refrained, though he chuckled a little at the idea.

Having paid his bill, he went on his way.

CHAPTER III.

I HAVE said at the end of the chapter before last, that several occurrences had happened—some affecting the principal personages of the story indirectly, and one, at least, touching them all more nearly. The former has just been dealt with ; and the latter must now be noticed.

Haldistow Hall was at no very great distance from the sea, as has been already hinted. Looking to the westward after passing the Mere, and following the road which ran by its side, one had about two miles of sandy common to traverse before the ground began to descend ; and then a

snug little village, surrounded by somewhat stunted trees, and fields well cultivated but not very productive, afforded an agreeable change to the eye. In this village, the road divided into two, that to the southward running away on the left to a small seaport town at the distance of about twenty miles, and that to the west going straight on for about three miles farther to one of those pretty little watering places which stud the coast of England, shut in between the sea and high cliffy banks, sheltered by little promontories from cutting winds, and nourishing sweet gardens and many a deciduous and many an evergreen shrub, in its warm and comfortable nook.

It may be necessary to mention that the distance by sea from this little watering place to the seaport town I have spoken of was not more than ten miles, though by land it was three and twenty, which was caused by an estuary running up some way into the country and forcing the road to deviate considerably from a direct line in

order to reach its destination. The coast from the little watering-place, which I shall call Halcombe, to the mouth of the estuary I have mentioned, a distance of about six miles, was bold and rocky, with here and there detached masses of grey stone rising out of the sea itself at a short distance from the shore. Each, amongst the fishermen and country people, had its own fanciful name from the various forms assumed. now a large square block like a table, now a high towering fragment like a minaret, now a round knob like the bald head of an old man, and now a strange shaped mass of stone, to which imagination gave the appearance of an arm-chair.

On the evening of one warm and beautiful day in June, a pleasant little dinner-party was assembled at Haldistow Hall. The only person present, who was not by blood or adoption, of the family, was our good friend, Mr. Greenshield ; and, as usual, the conversation wandered over a variety of different subjects. Now the

politics of the day, which would be very uninteresting to a modern reader, formed the topic ; but that was soon cast aside, for all present were of one opinion ; and then the picturesque beauties and antiquities of the country surrounding them were discussed.

“How far is it to Airmouth?” asked Mr. Greenshield. “I must ride over some day and see it. There is a fine old church there, I believe.”

“O, it is a long way by land,” said Sir John ; “but I will tell you a better plan. Let us make a party, and all go over together to Airmouth. We will drive down to Halcombe ; get one of their nice large boats, and sail across ; see all that is to be seen—and there is a good deal, let me tell you, for an observing eye—dine at the George, and come back in the evening. I will be your master of the revels and take all the arrangements on myself. When shall it be ? Let us say, to-morrow. I daresay, it is a free day with us all. The

weather is beautiful—the days growing long, and things delayed are seldom accomplished.

Mr. Richard Haldimand made some difficulty on account of parochial matters; but Sir John overruled all objections. The party was arranged for the following day; and many a pleasant little additional scheme was laid out for crowding as much enjoyment as possible into a short space of time. We are accustomed to consider Faith, Hope and Charity merely as virtues which lead us to eternal happiness hereafter. We rarely think of the infinite blessings which each of them bestows upon us here—how Faith endows us with that cheerful confidence which is the basis of all happiness; how Hope, plucking fruit from every tree, gathers for us vast treasures of enjoyment which never can be contained in the narrow storehouse of the present; and how Charity expands through infinite relations those kindly affections which are the sources of all earthly bliss.

The party assembled in that old hall were full of hope; and, like the fairy of the Eastern tale, Hope's tent will stretch to contain whatever we choose to place in it. Had the next day been destined to comprise as many hours as that during which the sun stood still upon Gibeon, it would not have furnished time for all that was proposed; till at last the whole party laughed to think that they were laying out the occupations of a month for the expedition of a day.

The laugh was still upon their lips when Mr. Hush quietly entered the room with a silver salver in his hand and a letter upon the salver. Sir John looked towards him, supposing that the epistle must be for himself, the post having come in some hours before; but Mr. Hush passed him quietly and presented the letter to Colonel Haldimand, saying,

“Your servant, sir, brought this from London, post. He is waiting.”

Charles Haldimand broke the seal with-

out apology; and Kate remarked that his eye looked anxious, and his cheek a little pale. He was not a man to show emotion without cause; and she saw that he was apprehensive of something. The next moment he laid the letter down on the table, thought for a minute, and then said,

“This is very unfortunate!”

“What is it, Charles, what is it?” exclaimed Sir John. “Friends have a right to hear whatever friends think unfortunate.”

“My regiment is ordered immediately to India,” said Colonel Haldimand; “and my presence is required in London without delay. It seems bad news has arrived; fresh troops are to be sent out instantly; and my regiment is to embark at once.”

“Oh, Charles, will you go?” exclaimed Mrs. Haldimand; and Kate murmured nearly the same words in a lower tone.

Charles looked from the one to the other somewhat sadly. He would have looked gay if he could; but it was impossible; and he replied,

“ My dear mother, I *must* go.”

“ He must indeed,” said Sir John Haldimand.

“ Can he not exchange into another regiment?” asked Mrs. Haldimand. “ It is a thing I hear of every day.”

“ Not when I am ordered on active service, dear mother,” replied her son. “ That would bring down imputations on me for which I must give no cause. Even were it right, there would be no time. I must be in London the day after to-morrow; and probably in two days more we shall sail; for the regiment is already at Chatham, and a transport waiting at the Nore.”

Mrs. Haldimand said a few words in a low tone to her son; and Charles’s eyes were instantly turned towards Kate. What he saw in her face I need not stay to describe; but the next moment he said, in a more cheerful tone,

“ Well, it is but a long voyage thither and back. I will go and do my duty without hesitation; but when I have shown my

readiness, there can be no objection to my effecting an exchange and returning to my native land. I will tell the commander-in-chief at once that I have many ties which bind me to my native country, and that it is my intention, as soon as the good of the service admits, to exchange or retire upon half-pay."

Kate thanked him in her heart; and after a few words more on the same subject, some one said,

"Of course our pleasant expedition of to-morrow is at an end."

"No, I will not have it so," exclaimed Colonel Haldimand. "Indeed this shall not stop your going."

"It must, it must, Charles," said Sir John.

"But listen to me one moment, my dear uncle," said Charles. "You would not deprive me of a great pleasure, I am sure; and I have arranged all the plan in my mind at once. To-night, I will pack up, send off my servants and baggage to-

morrow morning, go with you all to Halcombe, thence cross with you to Airmouth. It is a saving of a good many miles. The wind is favourable to-night ; and we shall see how long we take to make our little voyage. I shall arrive at Airmouth in plenty of time to reach London by the following morning ; and perhaps, if our sail is expeditious, may even steal a few hours of happiness more with you at Airmouth. You shall see me into the post-chaise, and then return if you like."

He spoke in a cheerful tone ; but he could not communicate any thing like cheerfulness to the rest of the party. It was agreed, however, to follow the plan he proposed. Mr. Greenshield took his leave sooner than usual, Sir John promising to call for him in the carriage, at an early hour on the following day.

We need not look at the farther passing of that evening. The real parting between Kate and Charles Haldimand took place when he left the house that night. Kind

words and many promises, some affecting trifles, and some important interchange of thoughts for memory to brood over during absence, passed between them ; and Kate made up her mind to be firm and composed on the following day, or, at least, to seem so.

CHAPTER IV.

It was a beautiful morning, clear, warm, and bright. The wind continued still in the same quarter. If there were any clouds in the sky, they were but those thin, filmy streaks of white, which we sometimes see chequering the summer blue. A very gentle air breathed over the fields; and the gossamers were stretching their threads from stalk to stalk under the sunshine, like tiny artisans weaving for the earth a robe of sunbeams. All was very bright, and very beautiful, and very gay; but the heart of Kate Haldimand was sad. It was very natural, she

thought ; and yet sometimes it seemed more than natural to her, notwithstanding. For some reason, Mrs. Haldimand was very sad also—sadder than she had ever been in parting from her son. True, he had never left her for so far a journey before ; true, the climate was not considered a healthy one ; true, when people get older, and the end of life, so indistinct at the beginning of our career, becomes more and more definite and visible, we doubt whether those who part from us will ever have time to rejoin us again, ere our race is concluded and we lie down to rest. Nevertheless, the feeling of gloom that oppressed her seemed to herself greater than the circumstances justified. There was an icy despondency with it, which she had never before felt ; for which she reproached herself, as if it proceeded from a want of faith. She struggled with it, but in vain ; and the most she could do, was to assume a calmness which she did not feel. She resolved to do so, however, for poor

Kate's sake ; and she was tolerably successful.

About nine o'clock, the carriage stopped near the Haldimand Arms for Mr. Greenshield, a servant having been sent on before to Halcombe, to prepare a boat and have everything ready. Mr. Greenshield had had a debate with himself that morning, as to whether he should go or not. He suspected that, in the circumstances existing, he might prove the one too many : he might know, too, that with such feelings in the hearts of all, the party was not likely to be a very cheerful or pleasant one ; but he was not a selfish man ; and that would not have influenced him. After trying the pros and cons, however, for some reason he determined to go, though it was certainly without any anticipation of much pleasure. The party in the barouche consisted of four ; for Charles Haldimand and Kate were in a pony phaeton behind ; and the distance to Halcombe was soon run over.

Every thing had been prepared for their arrival ; the carriages were left at the little inn ; they embarked on board the pretty yacht, and were soon sailing away slowly towards Airmouth ; the wind, though favourable, was low ; and it soon became clear that Colonel Haldimand would have but little time to stay after their arrival. I am not sure that Kate regretted it ; for, with the beautiful sky above, and the gently-rippled sea below, and the slow moving coast on the left, and the lagging, lingering motion of the boat as it sped tardily onward, it was just the manner and the scene in which she could wish to pass the last hours of her stay with him. Time speeds on, however. They neared the port ; they entered the little harbour ; they landed ; and as they reached the inn, Kate heard Charles Haldimand say something to the ostler about a chaise. Her heart sank. A few minutes passed in almost complete silence. Then came a rattling sound under the archway ;

and Charles took his mother in his arms and kissed her. He pressed Kate too, for an instant, to his heart, and then was gone. Sir John, his father, and Mr. Greenshield had descended the stairs before him ; and the two who remained mingled their tears together.

In some lives, there are occasional brief periods of happiness, which may be considered almost perfect, when all is enjoyment or anticipation of joy. They never last long ; they are never known in latter life ; for then, both sides of the prospect become cloudy even when the sky is bright above. There must be sad memories ; they will accumulate around the past ; there must be much to be regretted, much to be mourned ; and their shadows mingle with and temper the brightest lights of after years. Kate's day of unmingled happiness was over ; and at her heart she felt that it was so.

The chaise rolled away ; but it was more than half an hour before Sir John

and the other two gentlemen returned. He strolled with them through the town and talked of various things, but not without an object. He sought first to cheer his brother, who, though perfectly calm, felt deeply, as Sir John well knew, the parting with his son : he sought also to give time for Mrs. Haldimand and Kate to become more composed ; and, finding that their tears were dried and that they could converse calmly when he did return, he proposed that they should go and see this thing or that in the neighbourhood of the little town, not with the hope that they could enjoy, but with the assurance that any thoughts which could be abstracted from the theme which occupied both their minds, would be so much gained in the way of relief.

There was nobody to oppose him. So Sir John had his own way.

But I am not about to write the Airmouth guide-book, nor do I wish to describe the old church, though it has two of the prettiest win-

dows in England, nor the old castle, though the barbican is better preserved than anywhere else in our country, and the lower part of the north-east tower shows Saxon rubble and two flat stone windows. We will pass over the next few hours, therefore. Suffice it to say that Sir John and Mr. Greenshield, by quiet but persevering efforts, contrived from time to time to while the minds of the two ladies from sadder thoughts, and that when they returned to their boat in the evening, they were tranquil enough though by no means gay.

The weather had somewhat changed, though the wind was still in the same quarter. Heavy clouds had gathered about the horizon, lying in long, grey streaks on a somewhat misty sky, with here and there behind them the outlines of large, rolling vapours shooting far up like columns and mountains. The sun, with not more than an hour and a half of his course to run, hung large and orange-coloured on the western sky, sometimes half

hidden by a cloud, but never wholly obscured, and still pouring forth a long stream of fiery light over the ever-moving surface of the waters. It was a gorgeous scene, somewhat stormy in aspect, it is true; but still Sir John thought that the weather would assuredly not change before the following day, although the barometer in the inn passage had fallen, and the mercury stood cupped in the tube. Nevertheless, the old boatman, as they ran out of the harbour, looked very gravely to windward, and remarked to one of his two sons who were with him,

“It looks dirty, Bill.”

Sir John asked him some question about the weather; and he replied—

“We shall have more wind than we want, your honour, seeing that it is not altogether right for us.”

“There is no danger, I hope,” said Mrs. Haldimand.

“Oh, no, ma’am,” answered the man.
‘We shall get in before it comes to blow

hard ; and then it would but make you sick a little, may be—no danger in life.”

It did blow harder than Mrs. Haldimand at all liked before they had been half-an-hour out of the harbour. Their progress was but slow ; for they were obliged to tack continually in order to make any way at all. The sea got rough, too, with white foam curling the tops of the waves ; and every now and then the little boat dashed down the side of a broad swell, as if it were going into the very depth, and then up another watery mountain with the spray dashing in, while Mrs. Haldimand shut her eyes, and hardly drew her breath, holding on tight by the gunnel of the yacht. The clouds came up fast too ; and, though the sun was still partly seen shining out beneath the edge of the dark canopy and pouring a violet-coloured light upon the sea, some heavy drops of rain came dashing along upon the blast, uniting with the spray to drench the travellers in the boat.

Mrs. Haldimand was anxious to take in sail ; but she did not venture to propose such a thing ; and Kate sat silent and thoughtful, with her mind far away, and so busily occupied that she hardly noticed the threatening aspect of the sky, although a faint sense of the grandeur of the scene came to the eye, but reached no farther. The boatmen were very busy ; and from time to time, when it was necessary to tack, Mr. Greenshield gave them some assistance, which they despised at first, till they saw he had some acquaintance with such things, but were then glad enough of, as the wind increased in violence every moment. The tide was rising, which was the only point in favour of the voyagers for the first long hour ; but at the end of that time, the wind shifted a point or two to the southward of west ; and the old boatman exclaimed—

“ Now, we shall do ! Here, Bill, take the helm.”

His words were a great comfort to Mrs.

Haldimand ; for the sun was now almost touching the edge of the water. She thought she saw the white houses of Halcombe at some distance upon the right ; but, by this time, it was raining hard ; and the thick vapour coming down in irregular lines, like a school-boy's pencil-drawing, almost hid the sight of the coast, though it was not far distant. The course of the boat seemed now to be altered, however, to a direct line for the shore ; and while one of the sons steered, the old man stood in the bow, and gave him directions, from time to time, in language which neither of the ladies understood. As the yacht bore on, however, the coast-line became more distinct ; the houses stood out clear and plain ; and every moment was bringing them nearer and nearer to the wished-for dry land. To the eye, they seemed not more than a hundred yards from shore, when the old man, standing in the bow, exclaimed—

“ Mind the Cobstone, 'Bill' and then

added, in a rapid and angry voice—"Port your helm, port!" with a fearful execration.

At the same instant Kate felt Mr. Greenshield seize her by the arm. There was a violent concussion, which threw her nearly from the seat; and before she could collect her senses she was struggling underneath the water. She was only conscious that a firm and strong hand held her still; and the next instant she rose to the surface. She saw human forms beating with the waves around her, but no boat. It had gone, disappeared, sunk beneath those fierce waves. The same hand still held her however; and a voice said—

"Do not try to touch me, and you are safe. If you do, we are both lost."

She could not resist the impulse of nature. It was too strong for resolution and self-command. She strove to catch at anything that was near her: but the grasp that was upon her was exceedingly powerful, and kept her at some distance with the face slightly raised above the water, draw-

ing her rapidly on towards the shore. From time to time the waves dashed over them; but still they rose, and still they hurried on in the direction of the land.

Wild with terror, confused by the waves dashing over her, and all the horrors of the sea, Kate could only murmur—

“My father, my father!”

For some time there was no answer. Either the person who held her did not hear, or, eager alone to serve her, made no reply. At length, however, she felt a difference in the motion, and, the next instant, was lifted in a man's arms from the water, and borne on for a step or two. At the same time two or three rough voices cried—

“Here, let me help you. Give her to us. We'll carry her up.”

Kate opened her eyes, which she had kept hitherto closed, and found herself in the arms of Mr. Greenshield, still nearly up to his middle in the sea, with several fishermen round him.

“My father, my father!” cried Kate again.

“ He is safe,” replied Mr. Greenshield, “ he is safe ;” and the next moment he added, “ I saw one of the boatmen supporting Sir John. A boat has gone off ; and he is safe, I trust.”

“ They have got him in, miss,” said one of the fishermen near. “ Here, give me her feet, sir. You have had hard work enough ; and well you have done it. They have got Sir John in, miss—I saw them myself. Keep a good heart. It’s a bad job, but no harm done, I hope ; only you’ll get your death of cold.”

While they spoke, they continued to bear her up to the little inn, which lay close to the beach.

The tidings of the accident had spread like wildfire through the village. Hundreds both of inhabitants and visitors were out ; and many a strange face presented itself around, gazing upon the poor girl as they bore her along. Quick and eager tongues, too, were busy around her, commenting, commiserating, and offering advice ; and

the landlady of the inn, with her maids, was ready at the door, with agitated but really serviceable bustle, to render any service in the accident which had befallen. In his own arms Mr. Greenshield carried Kate up the stairs, preceded by the landlady, to a bed-room, and laid her gently on the bed. He stopped not a moment with her there, however, but pressed her hand kindly, saying—

“Thank God you are safe, my dear Miss Haldimand. Keep your mind quiet. Sir John is safe, depend upon it. I will go and see what more can be done.”

“Oh, take care of yourself too,” said Kate, in a low voice, “and let me hear of my father. I shall not have any peace till I see him safe.”

Mr. Greenshield hurried down to the beach again as fast as he could go. The boat which had put off was just nearing the shore ; and he advanced, up to the middle in the water, to get the first sight of what it contained. All that had been in the

unfortunate yacht were there ; but it was a sad sight, nevertheless. The old boatman was lying stretched out, with one of his sons bending over him, chafing his neck and chest. Sir John, partly in the bottom of the boat, partly supported by the knees of one of those who had gone out to give help, was certainly more like a dead man than a living one, although Mr. Greenshield thought he saw him move his arm. Mr. Richard Haldimand was seated near, with the body of his wife in his arms, gazing intently on her face, and seeming to heed nothing else ; but her eyes were closed ; her head fell back over his arm ; and her left hand dropped lifelessly towards the bottom of the boat.

The next moment the keel touched the shore ; and the boat was hauled up by the people on the beach. Then immediately the bustle and the crowding began again ; and each of the sufferers was carried out and away. The old boatman to his own cabin, Sir John and the rest to the inn.

The two surgeons of the watering-place were there already ; and immediate efforts were made to restore animation in Sir John and Mrs. Haldimand. The former was evidently still living ; and in a few moments returning consciousness was apparent. A few spoonfuls of wine were then poured into his mouth. He opened his eyes, gazed round, and his first words, uttered with a great effort, were—

“ Kate, my dear Kate, where is she ? ”

“ She is safe, Sir John, quite safe and uninjured,” said Mr. Greenshield. “ Shall I bring her to you ? ”

“ On no account,” cried the surgeon, interposing. “ The least excitement might be dangerous.” But Kate was already in the room ; and the next instant was kneeling by the bedside of him who had adopted and cherished her from infancy. She was very quiet : she uttered not a word, but, with her head bent down, and tears streaming from her eyes, kissed the old

man's hand and raised her heart in thanks to Heaven.

Mr. Greenshield glided quietly out of the room, and turned his steps to the apartment whither Mrs. Haldimand had been carried in the arms of her husband. Knowing that one of the surgeons was there with several other persons, he did not like to go in uncalled, as he had little hope of rendering any effectual assistance. He listened at the door, however, for a minute or two ; but there was silence within except when the voice of the medical man gave some direction in a very grave tone, or one of the chamber-maids uttered some exclamation. The voice of Mr. Richard Haldimand was not heard. At length, a girl came running out ; and, following her as she hastened along the passage, Mr. Greenshield asked for tidings. The girl shook her head sadly.

“ I am going for the bricks they have been heating, sir,” she said, still hastening

onward ; “ but it is all no use, I am sure. She’s as dead as a stone, poor thing !”

With a sad heart, Mr. Greenshield descended the stairs, remembering that there was another who required aid, and who might not be so able to obtain it as those he left behind. Poor as well as rich met with his sympathy, although the close intimacy which had arisen between himself and the various members of Sir John Haldimand’s family had naturally called his first attention to them. Taking his way along the little row of houses upon the beach, with the wind now increased to a gale, he walked on in the direction in which he had seen the old fisherman carried, to a spot where several inferior cottages were gathered together beyond the lodging-houses. He met several persons as he went ; and one of them, a gentleman who seemed a visitor, evidently recognising him as one of the party in the unfortunate boat, stopped him to inquire for the family of Sir John Haldimand.

“Sir John is recovering,” replied Mr. Greenshield ; “and Miss Haldimand is quite well ; but I very much fear that Mrs. Richard Haldimand is beyond hope.”

The stranger would evidently have willingly protracted the conversation ; but Mr. Greenshield tried to terminate it by inquiring which was the fisherman’s cottage.

“I have just come thence,” replied the other, gravely ; “and I am afraid that the case is hopeless there also. It is the second door on the right after passing the bathing machines.”

Hurrying on, Mr. Greenshield reached the door of the house, which stood open with several persons round it, rough boatmen and their wives, but still people not without feeling, though their manner of showing it might not be very polished.

“How is the old man ?” asked Mr. Greenshield, addressing a tall, powerful man in a blue jacket and fisherman’s boots.

“Dead, I think,” answered the boatman,

with stern gravity. "The young doctor is working away at him ; but if he brings him to life again he'll do more than I think. Go in, sir. There's nothing to stop you."

Mr. Greenshield accordingly entered the cottage, and found it half full of people. A young man, a surgeon's assistant, with the aid of one of the old man's sons and a daughter of about sixteen years of age—more quietly and serviceably busy than all, though the tears were dropping down over her cheeks like rain—was labouring to restore animation though with very little hope. Others were talking in a low voice, and some rendering assistance in rather an awkward manner. Mr. Greenshield spoke a few words to the young surgeon who shook his head doubtfully, and then turned round to look for the other son, whom he did not at first perceive. He found him sitting on a chest in the corner, with his head bent down upon the open palms of his hands which covered his eyes and the greater part of his brows. He remained

quite motionless and silent ; but the visitor could see his broad chest heaving, apparently with strong emotion. After he had gazed at him for a minute, an old woman who stood by whispered in Mr. Greenshield's ear, " Poor Bill thinks that it was *his* fault the boat was swamped, and says that he has killed his father."

" That is nonsense," said Mr. Greenshield, aloud. " He could not help it, poor fellow."

The young man instantly uncovered his eyes, lifted his head, and gazed full at the stranger ; and Mr. Greenshield sat down upon the chest beside him, laying his hand upon his.

" Do not give way to such sad fancies," he said, in a gentle and kindly tone. " The accident was no fault of yours ; and if I had lost the dearest friend I had, I should still say so."

The young man wrung his hand hard, saying, " That's comfort ; that's comfort ! But you do not know, sir, you do not know

that I ought to have given the boat more room."

"Yes, indeed I *do* know," answered Mr. Greenshield. "I have been accustomed to such things all my life, and been in surf such as you never saw. I tell you, upon my honour, you could not have helped it. It was impossible for you to perceive the rock with such a sea running; and the set of the tide as well as the wind bore you more to leeward than any one could have calculated upon. The only thing that could have saved us would have been to cast loose the fore sheet. Then perhaps we might have rounded the rock; but nobody can tell even that. At all events, it was no fault of yours. You did your best; and there was in reality no blame to any one."

"I wish I could think so, sir," said the young man, shaking his head sadly, but yet evidently comforted.

"There, Bill, there," said a good-natured boatman near. "The gentleman says it

was no fault of yours ; and he must know."

"I think he must," said the young man, "for he had his senses more about him than any of us. It was the lady drowned my father, for he could swim well enough ; but she got clinging round him ; and they both sunk twice before I could reach them."

"Well, don't reproach her even in your heart, my good young man," said Mr. Greenshield. "It was an impulse which could not be resisted, depend upon it ; and by yielding to it two lives have been sacrificed, I fear. She has gone to another world where we shall all soon follow her ; and those who are parted here will meet again. Rouse yourself, William ; come and see whether there is any chance of restoring your father, and be assured that you are utterly blameless in the whole sad affair."

The young man rose and approached slowly to the old man's bedside ; but when he saw, by the light of the single candle,

the pale and icy countenance, with the grey hair streaming wildly about it, the manly spirit gave way ; and he burst into a bitter flood of tears. They were the first he had shed ; but man's tears are unlike woman's ; they bring no relief with them.

Mr. Greenshield stayed a few minutes longer, induced some of the people to leave the little room in order to give more air, and then took his way back towards the inn. The stout fisherman, whom he had seen at the door, walked along by his side, saying—

“There's no chance, I'm afraid, sir ?”

“I fear not,” answered Mr. Greenshield ; “though the surgeon had better go on as long as possible with what he is doing ; for I have known a person restored to animation after lying apparently dead for more than an hour. Let him spare no means, whatever be the cost. I will pay for it.”

“He is dead enough, I believe,” said the

man ; “ and they tell me the lady is dead too. She looked like it in the boat ; for I was one of those who went off.”

“ I fear it is so, indeed,” replied Mr. Greenshield : “ and Sir John Haldimand was very nearly drowned also ; but he is recovering. I cannot imagine how Mr. Richard Haldimand escaped so well.”

“ He got hold of a spar, sir, or an oar, or something,” replied the boatman, “ though, when he saw us take the lady in like one quite dead, he let go his hold, and went down ; and he’d have been drowned, too, if my brother John had not jumped over and brought him out. You got the young lady ashore quite safe, I think. I never saw such swimming in my life.”

“ She is quite safe,” answered Mr. Greenshield, gravely ; “ but the one most to be pitied, is the young man, William. You must all of you try to keep him up, and assure him it was not his fault, as he thinks. I saw the whole ; and even if he had ported the helm a little sooner, we

should only have come broadside too, instead of striking with the bow."

"It's been a bad evening's work, however," said the boatman; "but that Cobstone is as d—d a brute as ever was. When the tide sets strong that way, if you do not keep very wide, you are sure to be on her before you know what you are about. This is the third boat I have seen swamped just there in my own time; and there has been many a one before."

"It should be marked," replied Mr. Greenshield; "for none of us saw it till the moment before we struck, and then only by the run of the water. However, I should like to see those who went off to help, if they can come to me to-morrow morning, as I suppose we shall stay at the inn to-night."

After a few words more, he parted with his new companion, and, re-entering the hotel, inquired of the landlady, who was now below, whether Mrs. Haldimand had shown any signs of returning life.

“No, sir, no,” answered the good dame. “They are still going on ; but it’s all useless, I am sure. She looks quite calm and pleasant ; but she is dead, beyond all doubt, or I never saw a corpse.”

So indeed it proved. Every means were employed that medical science had discovered in those days to bring poor Mrs. Richard Haldimand to life, during fully two hours ; but not the slightest symptom of returning animation ever showed itself.

Mr. Greenshield found Sir John Haldimand sitting up in bed, with Kate by his side, and one of his servants in the room receiving some orders. The good old baronet was looking actually cheerful ; and even Kate was smiling. Mr. Greenshield was surprised ; but he found that, by order of the surgeon, what he considered very unjustifiable had been done. Not only had they concealed from Sir John and his adopted daughter, Mrs. Haldimand’s real state, but they had assured them she was getting better every minute, and that her

husband was only sitting by her to keep her quiet, and see that the surgeon's orders were properly obeyed. He looked very grave ; but he did not choose to dispel suddenly the delusion into which they had been led, although he never would have encouraged it. Pressing Sir John Hal-dimand's hand as the baronet held it out to him, he said—

“ I am glad to see you so much better, Sir John ; but really quiet is absolutely necessary for you ; and I think I shall exercise an old gentleman's privilege of taking this dear young lady away, and leaving you to rest for a short time. She has got dry clothes, I see, though I cannot say they fit her very well.”

“ Nay, neither she nor you must go,” said Sir John, “ till I have thanked you from my very heart for saving my dear Kate, and till she has thanked you also.”

“ Not a word upon that subject.” said Mr. Greenshield. “ If a Newfoundland dog had not done the same in such cir-

cumstances, he would deserve to be shot or hanged ; and all that I did, he would probably have done much better. But come, my dear Miss Haldimand, with me into the sitting-room opposite, and make me a cup of tea. Sir John will be much better left in perfect quiet for about an hour. Such is the universal prescription, I assure you ; and he can ring if he wants anything."

" Very well, I submit," said Sir John Haldimand ; and, turning to the servant, he said : " You, Stephen, take one of the horses to Haldistow as I bade you, and tell them that we have met with an accident, but that we are all safe and well. We shall stay here to-night, but be back, I trust, early in the morning."

Kate, her preserver, and the servant quitted the room together ; but, as soon as the door was closed, Mr. Greenshield told the footman to wait a few minutes before he set out, as he had a message to send.

He then led his fair companion into the sitting-room.

"I trust," he said, "you feel none the worse. my dear Miss Haldimand."

"Not at all," she replied. "I am perfectly well, and do not even feel chilly, as I might have expected."

Mr. Greenshield paused gravely, with his eyes bent down; and a vague feeling of apprehension began to creep over Kate.

"I think you have some strength of mind," said Mr. Greenshield, raising his eyes, and at the same time putting a seat for her. "Are you yet equal to the task of consolation?"

Kate turned deadly pale.

"Good Heaven! what do you mean?" she exclaimed. "They have deceived us."

"They have indeed," answered Mr. Greenshield. "At least, I fear so—though perhaps all hope is not yet over."

"O, who is it, who is it?" exclaimed Kate, clasping her hands. "Is it my uncle Richard?"

"It is for him your consolations will be required," replied Mr. Greenshield. "They

are still labouring against hope ; but I fear very, very much, that all will be in vain. Now compose yourself, my dear young lady. Think not of your own loss, not of the friend whom it has pleased God to take, but of the duty which God imposes upon you, to comfort the afflicted, and to support one who is heavily smitten. Bend all your thoughts on that ; and in the performance of this duty you will find consolation yourself."

"I will try, I will try," said Kate, endeavouring in vain to stop the current of her tears; give me a moment or two, and I shall be better able. They have deceived us cruelly."

"Not cruelly, but wrongly," replied Mr. Greenshield. "I hear them moving in the passage. Be firm, my dear Miss Haldimand, be firm. I think the mourner is coming."

The door opened; and Mr. Richard Haldimand and the surgeon appeared. Kate sprang forward to meet him; and he

threw his arms round her and pressed his lips upon her cheek. There were no tears in his eyes; and all he said was,

“God’s will be done!”

Thus ended a party of pleasure.

CHAPTER V.

THE next was a sad week at Haldistow ; but we cannot enter into the particulars. The funeral of poor Mrs. Richard Haldimand took place ; and Mr. Richard Haldimand performed the service himself. It was then seen, for the first time, what power there was in his calm, firm, gentle spirit. His voice might waver ; a resisted tear might rise in his eye ; but still clearly and solemnly he read the sublime parting words with which mortal dust bids adieu to kindred dust, and the spirit of faith proclaims the hope of re-union promised by God. The service being over, the rector, supported by his brother and Mr. Greenshield, returned

to his solitary dwelling, with a heart widowed indeed. His son was not at the funeral; for, before any letter could reach him, he had sailed, under the pressing orders of the commander-in-chief, for his destination in a far distant land.

Sir John Haldimand recovered from the accident he had met with; but, probably more from the shock to his feelings than from any injury to his corporeal frame, he was never altogether the same man he was before. His step lost its firmness and elasticity; he began to stoop a little; he was very much more grave; and people perceived, when he raised a glass or a cup to his lips, that his hand shook.

Kate, perhaps, suffered most from the consequences of the accident, although she had felt it so little at the time. The very following day, shortly after the arrival of the sad party at Haldistow, she was seized with fits of shivering; and on the next morning it was necessary to send for the principal surgeon in the neighbourhood—

at least the surgeon who had the most repute, but not the largest practice; for, though willing to attend in certain families of higher station, where whim or affection prompted, and always ready to give advice to the poor, he was an oddity in his way, possessed of a very considerable income, and by no means desirous of extending his professional occupations. Rarely indeed had medical aid been wanted at Haldistow Hall; but Sir John Haldimand had always kept up a friendly intercourse with old Doctor Porteus; and they were mutually fond of each other, notwithstanding great dissimilarity of character. The doctor was a Scotchman, had originally been a surgeon in the army, and had even lost a leg in the profession, for which all his life after he called himself a d—d fool, asserting that he had no business to be where he was when the ball struck him. Nevertheless, not the loss of a leg of flesh, and the unpleasant stumping of a wooden one, nor an exceedingly bad habit, then too

prevalent in all ranks of society, of cursing and swearing, nor another habit, which I am afraid has never been very prevalent, of telling the truth on all occasions in very plain and homely terms, had been able to shut him out from an exceedingly extensive practice in one of the great provincial capitals. He had afterwards bought a small property, about three miles distant from Haldistow; and, when any one asked him why he had not returned as usual to settle in his native country, he replied,

“Na, na. It’s a d—d deal ow’r cauld for my auld banes. It’s a fine country to be born in; but then the sooner one’s out o’t the better.”

Doctor Porteus had now been established in that part of the country for rather more than twenty years, and was of that sort of frame on which time seems to make little impression. Thin, raw-boned and tall, his outline, with the exception of the leg, was exactly what it had been when he was a man of five and twenty. The face,

however, had considerably changed. He had probably been a good-looking Scotch youth, with cheek bones not immoderately high, a clear, grey eye, a long and somewhat sharp-pointed nose, a chin very prominent and decided, and light brown hair somewhat inclining to a sandy hue. The hair was now almost white ; and under the influence of the powder-puff it looked like driven snow. The eyebrows had grown long and shaggy, the chin become more prominent, and the nose, what between wind and weather, to which he failed not to expose it at all seasons, and the influence of a moderate quantity of generous wine taken every night, had enlarged in volume, still, however, retaining its sharp point, and had become of a more glowing colour than the rest of the countenance, although that was rubicund enough. It was a healthy red, however, not the bloated purple hue of intemperance ; and the skin, though somewhat wrinkled and covered with a tracery of fine glowing

lines, was free from all warts and protuberances.

Such was the man who was now sent for to attend upon Kate, whom he had known from her infancy, and treated during all the little ailments of childhood. He stumped into the drawing-room where she was sitting with aching head and throbbing temples, dressed in his bright black coat, with a defined line of powder on the collar, and his hair gathered into what used formerly to be called a club, otherwise a very thick pigtail, hanging some four inches down his back ; tall, straight and upright as a pike staff, and managing his wooden leg with great dexterity from the practice of thirty or forty years. He shook hands with Sir John without saying a word, having heard of the affliction which had befallen the family ; and then, seating himself on the sofa beside Kate, he gazed in her face for a moment in silence.

“ Now tell me what is the matter, my dear,” he said, subduing his Scotch accent

as far as possible. "I mean, what do you feel?"

"I really hardly know how to tell you, Doctor Porteus. I have been so seldom ill that all I know is, I *do* feel ill at last," was Kate's reply; and the tears gathered in her eyes.

"Deil's in the lassie," said the old man, "does she expect to be always well? What would become of the poor creatures of doctors, to say nothing of quacks and charlatans, if such were God's will? Well, I suppose I must cross-examine you, as you've little experience in such things. I suppose ye feel a heavy weight and sinking at your heart?"

"I do indeed," said Kate, sadly; and Sir John Haldimand left the room.

"Symptoms of grief and not of sickness," said the old doctor; "but yet by the look o' your een I think there's something more. Do ye feel cauld and heated by turns?"

"I shivered very much last night," said

Kate ; “ but I have generally been very much heated to-day.”

“ Ay, and was so all night, I’ll answer for it,” said Doctor Porteus. “ Let me feel your pulse.”

He continued to hold his fingers on the wrist for two or three minutes, with his eyes half closed and his head bent, and then asked several other questions, after which he said :

“ Now you’ll have been one of the drooket folks, I’ll warrant. How long were ye in the water, my bonny bird ?”

“ I really can hardly tell,” answered Kate ; “ for I was so confused and terrified, that I knew little more than that some one was swimming with me towards the shore. It seemed a terrible long time ; and the distance was, I believe, about a quarter of a mile.”

“ He maun hae been a stout swimmer, that,” said Doctor Porteus. “ I doubt if I could hae done the same, tree leg and a’ though that would help me little ; for when

a man wants to keep his head aboon the water it's no use having a float at the other end."

Kate could not even smile ; and the good doctor proceeded, after a few minutes' thought—

" You see, my dear, you've got an awfu' cold, and then upon the back o' that you've had muckle sorrow, to say nothing of fright baith for yoursel and others. Ye must not treat this lightly but gang to your bed at once, and keep yoursel cozy there till I tell ye to get up. I'll talk to Sir John about ye, and order ye some physic ; for, although there's a great deal too much of that beastly trash crammed down people's throats in this world, yet sometimes it must be swallowed."

" I would a great deal rather avoid going to bed if possible," said Kate.

" Then ye may stay up and dee," said the doctor, pettishly ; " for I tell ye bed's the only medicine for ye—or at least the first and foremost ; for all the rest that I

shall give ye is but to help the effect of that ”

“ Only listen to me for a moment, dear Doctor Porteus,” said Kate, “ and do not be angry ; for a very little will make me cry to-day. I would fain sit up if possible to be with my dear father ; for he is in very great affliction ; and, though he has recovered wonderfully, I do not think he is at all well yet.”

“ Weel, my lamb, now you listen to me,” said Doctor Porteus. “ Which do you think would do the auld man maist harm, to see you sit up to cocker and croon over him and then die off like a green leaf nipped at the stalk, or to have ye away from him for a day or two and then quite well again ? He has taken ye, and cherished ye, and loved ye all your life ; and it would break his heart if any mischance were to befa’ ye. Now I tell ye the truth : if ye sit up as ye’re wanting, ye’ll be in a fever within four-and-twenty hours. I think we can put it by now, if ye’ll follow good ad-

vice ; and that'll be best for Sir John and for you too."

" Well," answered Kate, with a sigh, " I'll do as you direct."

" Besides," said the Doctor, continuing his discourse, " it wull do the auld deevil no harm to be in a bit of a fright about ye. It'll take his mind frae other things. Twa counteracting forces of equal value mak the result nil, my bonny lady. And I'll look to the auld man in the mean time. If he had seen as much of life's hardships as I have, he would be ower tough to be shaken by ony o' thae things ; but your prosperity, and your comfort, and your affluence, leave men as soft as French kickshaws all stewed to rags."

" Your heart is not as hard as you would have people think, Doctor Porteus," replied Kate ; " and I am sure if you had lost such a sister in such a way you would grieve as much as any one."

" She was a good creature, she was a good creature," said the old doctor ; " but

I should be a d——d fule to grieve for an angel going to Heaven. What does the bible say : Isaiah—forty-seven—one and two ? ‘ The righteous is taken away from the evil to come. He shall enter into peace : they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness.’ There ! now ye’re greeting ripe again. Gang to your bed, lassie, gang to your bed. I’ll see to the auld man, and will come and look at you again in the evening. Dinna be down-hearted. You’ll get over this weel eneugh.”

“ I wish my father would send for Mr. Greenshield,” said Kate, “ to stay with him till I am better.”

“ Wha’s Mr. Greenshield ?” asked Doctor Porteus, in a tone of surprise.

“ The gentleman who saved my life,” answered Kate ; “ and for whom both Sir John and his brother have a very great regard.”

“ Oo, ay ! That’s it, is it ?” said Doctor Porteus, with a look of funny shrewdness.

“ I’ll warrant he knew full well what he was lugging ashore. Love is as light as a cork jacket, I daur to say.”

Kate smiled faintly. “ You are mistaken, my dear doctor,” she answered. “ Mr. Greenshield cannot be much younger than my uncle Richard himself.”

“ Humph !” said Doctor Porteus. “ Weel, get to yer bed, there’s a dear bairn. Try and put all sad thoughts out of yer heed, and keep yersel’ as quiet as may be. I’ll send for Sir John in the meanwhile, and then I’ll gang down and see poor Dick. He’ll be in a bad case I’ll warrant, puir body.”

Kate did as he directed ; and the good old doctor held a long conference with Sir John Haldimand regarding her. He would not say that she had not actually a fever upon her, and alarmed the old baronet sufficiently in regard to his fair adopted daughter to withdraw his mind, in a degree, from other very painful thoughts.

Kate remained seriously ill for fourteen

days with low fever of not a very dangerous character but sufficiently violent to create much anxiety. With great care and attention however all formidable symptoms were warded off ; and in less than three weeks she was moving about as usual.

During all this period of anxiety as well as in all the scenes of grief and mourning which passed at the Hall and at the Rectory, Mr. Greenshield's society was the greatest comfort to the two brothers. Doctor Porteus was as willing to give consolation as any one ; but nature had squeezed into the large portion of the milk of human kindness which she had allotted him, certain drops of acid which had rather curdled it ; but there was something in the tone of Mr. Greenshield's mind harmonising so well with that of the two brothers, that after each visit he left them calmer, firmer, and, if not consoled, at least comforted. During Kate's illness he spent a great part of each day at Haldistow Hall, sympathising fully with the anxiety of Sir John

Haldimand and eagerly listening to the accounts of every change in her health.

When the period of danger was past, Mr. Greenshield strove with kindly zeal to lead the old baronet back to all his previous habits of thought, to amuse his mind and occupy his attention, knowing well that when towards the close of life, after a long period of prosperity and happiness, some sudden interruption of the golden chain takes place, the shock is far greater and more difficult to be recovered from, than when we have learned the lessons of sorrow early and been tried by occasional adversity. They rode ; they walked ; they conversed together ; they talked over public and private matters ; they visited farms, and schools, and buildings ; and every hour as it went by increased the esteem of Sir John Haldimand for his new acquaintance. They were like old and dear friends before they had known each other many months.

It was a happy day when Kate again joined the dinner party at Haldistow. Not

indeed that it was numerous ; for the clergyman had not dined out of his own house, even at his brother's, since the death of his wife. Doctor Porteus and Mr. Greenshield were the only two guests ; and when Kate entered the drawing-room, Sir John not having yet appeared, the two gentlemen were standing in one of the large windows talking, it seemed to Kate, very earnestly.

Mr. Greenshield had seen her several times since her illness ; but he now approached her with extended hand and a warm expression of satisfaction on his countenance, saying, " You really do look yourself again ; and I may now safely congratulate you upon your full recovery."

Kate thanked him for his congratulations ; and he led her quietly to the window, saying, " Do you know, dear Miss Haldimand, I have something to say to you ; and, for fear people should think it a love story, I am glad to have our good friend

here as a witness. I saved your life, with no great credit to myself certainly, for the exertion was small ; but still as I want to make the most of it, I must seek a guerdon."

Kate looked surprised, and was so ; but, before she could thank him once again for the service he had rendered, Mr. Greenshield went on, saying,

"Having saved your life, my dear young lady, as I have said, I look upon you as at least half my daughter ; and what I have to ask of you in return, is to regard me with similar feelings. Sir John has, of course, the first claim ; but we have all had a terrible warning of the insecurity of human life. All other human possessions are equally unstable ; and what I wish you to promise me is this, that if in future any difficulty, danger, or distress should befall you, when Sir John may not be at hand to counsel, direct, or protect you, you will apply to me as a father, and to none but me, in the first instance."

Some mingled emotions must have been in Kate's heart, as she listened ; for, though she smiled, she blushed also, and looked a little embarrassed.

"How much have I to be grateful for to you, my dear sir !" she exclaimed. "I know how it is with you ; but one kindness always seems to bring on another. I have heard all you have done for the family of the poor boatman ; how you visited and consoled them in their distress, and what you have done since. And now, not contented with saving my life, you would add other benefits."

"Nay, I claim a reward," answered Mr. Greenshield. "I am driving a bargain."

"Not a very hard one," answered Kate ; "and most gladly, and with the utmost confidence, would I apply to you in any moment of difficulty ; but I do hope and trust there will never be any occasion."

"Ye can never tell, my bonny lassie," said Dr. Porteus, shaking his head. "The

ways of life are a' in and oot like a dog's hind leg ; and they that count upon the jad hadding to the same mind for five meenets, reckon without their host. Why, here, not three weeks' sin syne, auld Sir John and a' the rest of your freends might ha'e gone to the bottom, and left ye swooming alane like Moses in the bulrushes. Promise the man what he wants ; for he is a gude sort o' body, I do believe, and auld enough to be yer gude sire. Ye maun be saxty, I'm thinking, Greenshield ?”

“ Not quite,” answered Mr. Greenshield, with a smile ; “ but still old enough to escape scandal, my good friend, if that is what you mean ; and I will undertake, my dear Miss Haldimand, that not even a rumour shall get abroad of your being so foolish as to marry an old man, or of my being so foolish as to fall in love with a young lady.”

“ I can assure you, my dear Mr. Greenshield,” replied Kate, “ that no such ap-

prehensions would ever enter my mind ; and I will very willingly promise you, if it can give you any pleasure, that should I need advice or assistance, I will readily apply to you : I must not exactly say, in the very first instance ; for there may be others, near at hand at the time, who would have a right to expect that confidence to be placed in them.”

“ Oo, ay, is that it ?” exclaimed Dr. Porteus, with a laugh, which called the blood up into Kate’s cheeks. “ Weel, weel, ‘ save and excepted ’ is a good clause in every deed. So I’m thinking ye maun just take her qualified promise for as good as it is worth, Greenshield. But here comes Sir John ; and now we shall ha’e the dinner ; and, to say sooth, my stomach is craving like a young corbie in the nest, wi’ thae late hours. Wha ever heard tell o’ folks ganging wi’ a toom wallet till half past five o’ the clock ?”

By Kate’s face, which was still slightly glowing, Sir John might have perceived

that something had passed which in a degree had agitated her ; and, to say the truth, Kate herself would willingly have told him all about it at once. Dinner, however, was almost immediately announced ; and when she came to consider the sort of promise she had made, although she wished much to mention it, and to consult Sir John upon the occasion, she found great difficulty in doing so. She recollected that that promise was based upon the supposition of her adoptive father's death, and of his having neglected to provide friends or guardians for her, who might supply his place.

An opportunity was afforded her, however, two or three days after, when, walking out in the park with Sir John, he turned the conversation himself to the sad accident which had lately befallen them, and noticed the chance which had existed of her being deprived of all her friends at once. Frank and straightforward, and with a heart which had never known conceal-

ment, Kate at once related to the old baronet all that had taken place between Mr. Greenshield, Doctor Porteus and herself. Sir John mused a moment, or two, but did not seem surprised, and certainly not at all annoyed. At first, his only reply was—

“He is always kind and considerate.” But, after a while, he said, “Greenshield has somewhat forestalled me in this, my dear Kate. Long ago, in making my will, of which my brother Dick is the executor, I named him (my brother) as your guardian, so far as I have any power to appoint one. But Dick has lately had a severe shock. We shall neither of us ever fully recover from the effects of this sad occurrence ; and either, or both, may be taken away from you without much warning. In these circumstances, I have been thinking for some days, of asking Mr. Greenshield to allow me to add his name to my brother’s. There are, certainly, many people whom I have known longer—many people in the imme-

diate neighbourhood for whom I have much esteem and regard ; but there are objections in almost all these cases. Particular circumstances, to which I need not refer, prevent me from applying to Lady Martindale. Our neighbour, Sir Harry Hillhouse, though a very good sort of man, is not at all the person I should choose as the guardian of a young woman. Lord Watford is an old puppy, though he means well, I believe ; and besides, he is no man of business. I, at one time, thought of applying to old Doctor Porteus, as excellent an oddity as ever lived ; but many reasons would induce me to prefer Mr. Greenshield, in whom I feel very, very sure, the utmost confidence can be placed. He is a man of business and a man of thought, kind, considerate, and, I believe, benevolent."

"O that he is, I am sure," cried Kate. "We none of us know all the good he has done since he has been here ; for it is always done quietly and secretly ; but every now and then I hear of it in my

visits to the different cottages ; and it is always bestowed judiciously and at the right moment."

"I doubt it not, my love," replied Sir John ; "for I remark that all the feelings of his heart are guided and controlled, though not crushed, by his reason. He has faults, doubtless ; for what man has not ? But it is sufficient for us that we have not discovered any, and that we have found many very good and noble qualities. At all events, I guard against any great risk by joining Richard's name with his. It may be God's will to spare both Dick and myself till Charles's return ; and then, my dear Kate, you will want no other protector or guardian either. I will speak to Greenshield to-day upon the subject ; and, after what he has said to you, there can be no doubt of his accepting the task."

Mr. Greenshield did not make his appearance, however, that day at the Hall ;

but, taking it for granted that he would make no objection to the proposed arrangement, Sir John Haldimand, in the course of the afternoon, sent off a servant on horseback to the little town, memorable for the meeting of Mr. Haldimand and Mr. Hush, with a letter to the solicitor of the place, Mr. Collinge, requesting him to come over to Haldistow Hall the next day at about two o'clock. The letter was given into the hands of Mr. Matthew Hush to dispatch immediately ; but two things are certain, that it did not go for nearly half an hour, and that before it went, Mr. Hush was fully aware of the whole contents. As those contents merely implied a wish that the lawyer would come over to Haldistow, it is not easy to see how they could affect Mr. Hush. Nevertheless, they certainly did seem to make him uneasy. As oversights will occur with the most prudent and circumspect persons, perhaps Mr. Hush had committed some little act of

negligence which he feared might disjoint certain of his various schemes. At all events, he not only was uneasy ; but, had any one been looking at him with a suspicious eye, his uneasiness would have been apparent. He watched Sir John Haldimand for an hour or more after the letter was sent, much more carefully than any cat watches any mouse. He moved about the passages with the incessant activity of an armadillo ; and when Sir John, for a moment, went into the little study, in which stood the old oak chest, he pursued him thither to ask him several questions, the answers to which he knew beforehand, and to tell him what our ancestors would have called a cock-and-a-bull story about a pipe of Madeira which he chose to think would require fining. He found Sir John, however, with his hat on his head, and his gloves in his hand ; and, while answering his questions, the baronet moved towards the door. With great satisfaction, at the apparent determination of going out, Mr.

Hush suppressed the story of the Madeira ; and, opening the hall door for Sir John, saw him take his way down the avenue with a strong but ungratified desire to know whither his steps were bent, and how long he would stay.

CHAPTER VI.

SIR JOHN HALDIMAND took his way down the road towards the Mere, his intention being to seek out Mr. Greenshield, and make his arrangements with him at once. His step was somewhat slower than usual ; he was in a grave, and, for him, even a melancholy mood. On arriving at the Haldistow Arms, he found Tom Notbeame before his door in a state of great activity, mending fishing lines, making artificial flies, and constructing landing nets : it was evidently one of Tom's brighter moments. On the appearance of Sir John, he not only sprang up from the bench, and pulled

off his hat, as usual, but even ventured a whole sentence uncalled for.

“Well, I am glad to see your worship down here again,” he said. “I hope now you will never be any worse for the ducking ; but till I saw you at the Mere again, I always thought something might go wrong.”

“Thank you, Tom, I am quite well,” replied Sir John, “though we have lost one whose place cannot be easily supplied. Is Mr. Greenshield within ?”

“No, Sir John, he’s gone to Halcombe,” replied Tom Notbeame, “to see after something about the two poor lads, Bill and Stephen, and to—”

“He has been very kind to them,” said Sir John ; “but I have not forgotten them either ; and, perhaps, he may find his object already effected. For fear of our both doing the same thing, however, you had better let him know when he comes home that I have ordered a new boat to be bought for them at Airmouth. It ought to be round to-day or to-morrow.”

“No, sir, it’s not that,” said Tom Notbeame. “He wants to get the parson of the place to have their sister Minny educated for a teacher in the school there ; and, also, he is going to have a buoy moored upon the Cobstone. He says, if that had been done long ago, more than one family would be all well and happy that have had both sorrow and loss.”

“He says very truly,” replied Sir John Haldimand, in a tone of self-reproach. “I ought to have thought of that myself. Well, tell him I called, and say that I wish he would come and breakfast or lunch with us to-morrow as I have something to say to him.”

“Lord bless your honour, he never takes any luncheon,” said Tom Notbeame. “He dines well and hearty ; but from five o’clock, when he gets up, till late in the day, he has nothing but one small cup of coffee ; and that he makes himself. He’s wonderful particular about his coffee, has it beaten in a mortar, and makes it in a

pipkin, and wouldn't let a bit of tin come near it for the world."

"I believe he is right," said Sir John Haldimand, turning away; "but tell him what I say, Tom."

Tom did not suffer him to depart, however, without following him up the road. For the first few steps, he did not speak. A fit of hesitation seemed to have seized him, which most probably would soon have deviated into a fit of taciturnity, had not Sir John turned towards him with a good-humoured look, saying—

"Well, Tom, do you want anything?"

"Yes, please your honour. I want to speak with you," said Tom. "I've wanted a long while. Only this accident, and Miss Kate's illness, and all the rest, stopped me."

"Well, what is it?" demanded his master, foreseeing that he might have some difficulty in getting from his companion even what he most desired to say.

"I'll get a bit along the road first, your honour," replied Tom. "They say walls have ears ; and I don't see why garden posts shouldn't have some too."

"You are mysterious, my good friend," said the old baronet, when they had taken a few steps forward. "Now, what is it, Tom ?"

"No, your worship ; I hate mystery," replied Tom Notbeame, still walking on. "They say it is written on the forehead of that poor old lady belonging to Babylon ; and, although I have always a pity for such folks, yet I shouldn't like to have anything to do with their ways. But what I was going to say to your honour is—you know Matthew Hush ?"

"Quite well," answered Sir John, with a nod. "What of him ?"

"Why, I've a notion he's a great scoundrel," said Tom Notbeame ; and there he stopped.

"That is a serious charge, Tom," replied the baronet, gravely. "If you speak of

what he has been, I know that, as a lad, he was a wild, unprincipled fellow. But he served my brother faithfully for a great many years. Mrs. William Haldimand, as amiable a creature as ever lived, took much pains to reform him. I have a very good account of his behaviour in my house from Mrs. Giles ; and I am inclined to hope and to believe that he is a very different character from what he was when he left Haldistow."

"Not a bit better than ever he was," answered Tom Notbeame, drily. "He's cheating your honour somehow, depend upon it."

"You must not make such assertions without proof," replied Sir John, sternly. "If you know of any evil that the man is committing, name it at once. If not, you should not attempt to prejudice me against him."

Tom Notbeame was silent for a minute. He was almost driven back into one of his old fits of taciturnity ; but he felt that he

must go on now he had begun, especially as Sir John had stopped in the midst of the road and kept his eye fixed upon him.

“Well,” he said, after a minute, with a sort of gasp, “all I want your honour to do, is to look after him. I’ll tell your honour what I saw with my own eyes, though I’m not good at telling a story any how. You recollect Master Henry being down?” Sir John nodded; and Tom Notbeame, after another gasp, went on. “He gave me a letter for your honour, which he wrote in my parlour, and made me promise to put it into your own hand or someplace in which you would be sure to find it. I could not get hold of you that night; and so I thought I’d just put it down in your library. You know the servants let me walk about in the house just like a tame cat. So, being alone in the servants’ hall, and more than half dark, I took it into the library and put it down at the place where you sit.”

“Why did you not give it to one of the servants?” said Sir John.

“Because Master Harry told me not, and, 'specially not to Matthew Hush. But that was not the thing at all. Right or wrong, I don't know ; but I put it there ; and then, when I was just going away, I heard a foot coming, as quiet as a fox's down a sandy lane ; but I've been accustomed to listen after all sorts of beasts. So I kept quiet and waited. The door of the library was partly open into the little room—the study, they call it—and I saw Master Hush come quietly into the study and look at the great oak chest that is there. Very hard he did look too, and long ; and then he stooped down and put his hand to the lid, as if to see whether it was open.”

“Did he open it?” exclaimed Sir John.

“No,” answered Tom Notbeame. “He did not open it. I could not very well see what he did ; but he fumbled about the lock somehow ; and I thought to myself,

‘ My fine fellow, if you’re going to put your head into that trap, here’s one hard by that will take care it shall catch you.’ But that’s not all, Sir John.”

“ What more ?” asked his master, seeing him pause.

“ Well, I don’t know,” said Tom, scratching his head. “ Perhaps it may be very impertinent, ’specially when it’s about your worship’s brother; but I should like to know if you were told that Master Hush was going over to meet Mr. William at Dingle.”

“ He asked my leave to go to Dingle,” said Sir John; “ but he did not say he was going to meet my brother.”

“ He *did* meet him, though,” answered Tom Notbeame; “ and was closeted with him for more than an hour.”

Sir John mused; and, after a long pause, much to the baronet’s surprise, the landlord of the Haldimand Arms burst into a loud fit of laughter, exclaiming,

“ Well, I shall never forget it, to the last day of my life ?”

“Forget what?” interrogated Sir John, somewhat sharply.

“Now I’ll tell you all, sir,” replied Tom; “but Lord bless your honour, don’t mention a word about it. Why, you see, he’s a cousin of the Martyrs, very good friends of mine; and perhaps they wouldn’t like my having served him so; but I was over at Dingle myself that day, and saw him meet Mr. William, and knew all about his being closeted with him at the Silver Cross for more than an hour; and I knew it could be for no good. He had a precious smart supper, too, in what they call the coffee-room. I saw it all out of the parlour, where there’s a glass-door, and where I was sitting with the landlord.”

Sir John made a somewhat impatient gesture, which Tom Notbeame interpreted into a command to cut his story short, and accordingly proceeded:

“Well, sir, when I saw him go away to his bed with more wine than enough, I thought I’d give him a fright. So when all the house was quiet, we got up the old

goat into the passage, intending to pop him into Mr. Hush's room—a precious job we had of it—but I resolved to give him notice what I thought of him. So, when we had got the goat just opposite the door, I halloo'd once or twice, 'Ain't you a precious rascal, Matthew Hush?' At first there was a gurgling noise in the room, as if some one was choking; then out he bolted out of bed and opened the door. We had hard work to keep Billy the goat there; for he scrambled about and tried to butt; and when he saw a chink of moonlight and a man in his shirt, he pitched right into him and knocked him down."

"I cannot approve of your conduct at all, Tom," said Sir John Haldimand; "and I think the whole transaction very wrong."

"Bless your honour, it would have done him a world of good," said Tom Notbeame, "if he had but taken the goat for the devil as I intended, and heard him crying out, 'Ain't you a precious rascal, Matthew

Hush?" I thought it might frighten him out of any mischief that was in his head. But that rascal Billy bolted away from us before we could stop him, and spoilt all the fun."

"I am glad to find that you did not intend to do the man any harm," replied Sir John ; " but I must warn you, Tom, not to do such things in future ; for, depend upon it, if you are brought before me as a magistrate for such pranks, I will not overlook them."

Thus saying he turned away, and walked up the road, pondering what he had heard. There was strong confirmation of the suspicions suggested by Henry Haldimand ; but happily for Sir John his mind was one very little capable of receiving suspicions—I say, happily, first, because the most miserable of all dispositions is a suspicious one, and secondly, the very fact showed that he had not often been deceived or betrayed in life.

"I will examine that chest, well," he

thought, as he walked homeward, "and talk to the fellow about this affair with my brother. It may be a mere nothing after all, a mountain made out of a mole-hill."

Close by the gates of Haldistow Park, however, Sir John met his brother Richard, turned with him into the village, and then persuaded him to come up and dine at the Hall. It was the first time the clergyman had been there since his wife's death ; and he felt it much. Sir John did his best during the whole evening by quiet conversation on matters of varied interest to occupy his brother's thoughts ; and consequently the examination of the old oak chest was put off till the following morning. Sir John went to bed somewhat fatigued ; the housekeeper saw that all the doors and windows were fastened ; and the whole household retired to rest—with the exception of Matthew Hush. But Matthew Hush was awake and lively. A full hour after everybody else had closed their eyes,

he might have been seen creeping quietly into Sir John's study, applying a key to the lock of the old oak chest, lifting the lid, and laying a somewhat large white paper parcel carefully down in one corner. The lid was shut again, the key turned ; and Matthew Hush stole back to his own room with a feeling of comfortable security. It was one of the greatest escapes he had ever had ; and, although he knew not how near he had been to detection, yet a vague sensation of having been in some danger and escaped it, rendered his feelings as he closed his own door behind him very satisfactory and his repose pleasant.

The next morning early, that is to say half an hour before breakfast, Sir John was in his study ; and, remembering with some rising doubts how Matthew Hush had pursued him thither the preceding day, he locked both the doors ; but Matthew Hush did not attempt to intrude now ; and Sir John carefully examined the lock of the chest and the edges of the wood work without

discovering a trace of any one having attempted to open it. When he went farther and looked carefully over the contents nothing was missing. Everything was in its place and in order, and so far he felt satisfied.

He then unlocked the doors and rang the bell ; and Matthew Hush appeared. That gentleman's eyes gave a quick but hardly perceptible glance round the room ; but in that rapid survey he perceived at once that the chest had been moved ; and his mind went on instantly to prepare for all contingencies.

Sir John, however, immediately opened the conversation on a matter which Mr. Hush had well considered, namely, his interview with Mr. Haldimand. In his meditations on that subject, Matthew Hush had only asked himself what lie would be expedient in case a hint of the meeting should ever be given to Sir John Haldimand. To deny it altogether, he saw would be very injudicious, and he determined

at once that the meeting should be accidental. But Sir John's first question was put in a way that puzzled him for a single instant.

"Pray, Hush," said the baronet, "when did you last hear anything of my brother William?"

"Does he know anything? and if he does, how much?" asked Mr. Hush, of himself; but he saw that the baronet, although he spoke in a quiet tone, fixed his eyes very keenly upon him; and he formed his decision in a moment.

"It is somewhat more than three weeks ago, sir," he replied, without the slightest embarrassment of manner. "I not only heard of him, but I saw him at Dingle, when you were kind enough to permit me to go over."

"Indeed!" said Sir John. "Was your meeting accidental?"

"Entirely, sir," replied Mr. Hush. "I thought Mr. Haldimand was in London;

but as I was standing at the inn door just at dusk, thinking whether I could get back that night or not, a chaise came dashing in, and was very nearly upset—it did fall against the wall, indeed ; and, running up to help, I found Mr. Haldimand in the chaise.”

He looked Sir John full in the face all this time, watching every movement of his countenance ; for Matthew Hush was not a down-eyed villain : he had passed that stage a long way.

“ My brother was well, I hope ?” said Sir John.

“ Quite well, sir,” answered the butler. “ He seemed a little shaken when first I got him out of the carriage ; but he told me to come and see him in an hour if I remained in the town ; and when I went he seemed quite recovered.”

“ He sent no message to me, I presume ?” said his master.

“ No sir, no message,” replied Mr. Hush. “ He asked a good deal about you, and

about Mr. Richard—how you both were, and whether your hair was as grey as his ; and he said you had been living a peaceful life while he had seen nothing but trouble. He was very kind to me too ; and was surprised to find that I was in your service ; for he had not heard of it before.”

Here the admirable Mr. Hush stopped ; for he was afraid of getting out of his depth ; and Sir John was inclined to drop the conversation, thinking that, as he had imagined, a mountain had been made out of a mole-hill.

Mr. Hush however clearly perceived that some one had been talking to Sir John about him ; and he was afflicted with a certain sort of vague doubt about the moving of the chest. Could he have left any trace of his practices ? he thought. He was always building up defences for himself, and sometimes they were very impudent ones. He therefore turned again

just as he was leaving his master, and said—

“ I beg your pardon, sir ; but I have been thinking, if you would permit me, I would polish up this old table and that chest ; for they are carved so beautifully it is a pity that they should not be done up again. I have got a very good receipt from London, and longed to set about it the other day ; but I did not like to touch them without asking your permission. There’s a little bit broken off the chest, too, which I think I could mend.”

It was a lucky piece of impudence. All was accounted for to the mind of Sir John Haldimand ; and Mr. Hush rose rather than fell in the baronet’s opinion, by the efforts which had been made to cast suspicion upon him. O, rascality, what a supreme commodity thou art ! It is quite a mistake to suppose that rascals don’t succeed. It is only small rascals that fail. If a man can but be rascal enough and is not nipped in the bud, he will do very

well. So at least Mr. Hush thought, as with a well-pleased nod Sir John dismissed him, saying :

“ No, no, it is not needful to take the trouble. They will do very well as they are.”

CHAPTER VII.

MR. GREENSHIELD readily accepted the trust which Sir John Haldimand desired to repose in him ; and, after a long private conference with the baronet upon several points affecting the task he undertook, the lawyer was called in, the codicil drawn up in due form, and the will replaced in the great oaken chest. The news was buzzed about among the servants that some alteration of the will had been made ; and every one agreed that Miss Kate was now to have all and everything. It spread through the neighbourhood ; it went to greater distances than might be imagined ;

it reached Lady Martindale ; it reached Mr. William Haldimand ; and both of them set themselves to consider of the matter.

The act he had just performed, however, seemed a relief to Sir John Haldimand ; for he felt that his strong constitution had been greatly shaken, and that his brother's health was much impaired, while his nephew Charles was at a distance, and no one at hand to protect and counsel Kate in case of need. Now, however, he had provided against all contingencies ; and he trusted that he had provided well.

Mr. Greenshield remained some weeks longer at Haldistow ; and when he departed, after a stay protracted much beyond the length of his usual visits, he wrote down on a slip of paper the words " Shepherd's Well Park, County of Hants."

" That is my address, my dear young lady," he said. " I think, notwithstanding good Doctor Porteus's jests, I am quite old enough to receive a letter from a young lady without scandal, and quite young

enough to read it with great pleasure. I shall be anxious to hear of you and all my friends here ; and, if Sir John has not time to write, I trust *you* will find the opportunity."

Kate parted with him with real regret, and thought of him often afterwards. His words used to come back to her mind ; and many a piece of advice he had given her was recollected, and proved serviceable long afterwards. Nor was Mr. Greenshield unmindful of her. About three weeks after his departure, a large case arrived, addressed to Sir John Haldimand. It contained some more curious and beautiful plants packed in the neatest possible manner, so that neither flower nor leaf received the slightest injury ; and each was ticketed in Mr. Greenshield's own hand. " For Kate's green-house."

" You see, my dear Kate," said Sir John, pointing out the tickets with a smile, " our good friend will not give in to the fashionable mode of calling it a conservatory.

He is a genuine Saxon, and adheres to the good old name of green-house."

"He would never call the library anything but the book-room," replied Kate laughing, "though I used to make war upon him about it ; for I do think these compound words very awkward."

There was one, however, of whom Kate thought much more than of Mr. Green-shield, but of whom she could not hear so often. The first letter received from Colonel Haldimand was dated from St. Helena, and was addressed to his father with an enclosure for Kate. He had not yet heard of the accident which had deprived him of a mother ; and he wrote in good spirits and in a cheerful tone, repeating his promise to exchange into another regiment, or retire upon half pay as soon as a proper opportunity occurred of doing so, and speaking of his joyful re-union with all he loved best, in terms which brought the tears into his father's eyes. Another letter was received from him some months after, in a

very different tone ; but in the meanwhile various little incidents had happened, of no great consequence, it is true, but which may be as well detailed in a chapter reserved for odds and ends.

Not long after Mr. Greenshield's departure from Haldistow, Sir John received a note from young Lord Martindale to the following effect :

“ MY DEAR SIR JOHN,

“ You were kind enough to say something about my coming to shoot at Haldistow. I am determined to take you at your word if you are still so hospitably inclined, and will present myself at the Hall on the 31st. of August in order to commence the campaign against the birds early on the following morning—that is to say, unless you forbid me.

“ Yours ever truly,

“ MARTINDALE.”

Such was the first effect of the rumour which had reached Martindale Abbey ; and we need not say that, though her ladyship did not exactly dictate the note, she was the author of the proposal. She had some mistrust indeed of her son's impetuosity ; and she determined to have some share in the final arrangements, whatsoever they might be. As soon therefore as the old baronet's reply had been received, she took up a fine pen and wrote upon a sheet of fine paper a letter to the following effect :

“ MY DEAR SIR JOHN,

“ Martindale tells me that he is going over to shoot at Haldistow, though I am sure he has plenty of shooting here if he likes it. So I do not see why he should trouble you with himself, his dogs and his guns.

“ When we last saw you, you were kind enough to promise that you would spare your dear Kate for a short visit to us.

Now it will be a much better plan if, when Martindale returns, which I suppose will be in a day or two after he has killed or missed all your game, you and Kate would come over with him, and spend a week or ten days with us. Alice, who is sadly in want of a companion, and feels mopish and lonely, will be delighted to see Kate ; and we will give you the meeting at Woton Bridge and bring you in in triumph.

“ Pray come, there’s a dear, good man, and at all events spare us Kate.”

Whether Sir John Haldimand suspected anything, and was clear-sighted enough to see through Lady’s Martindale’s very transparent proceedings, he certainly met them in a way which seemed calculated to throw out all her schemes. By return of post she received Sir John’s answer in the following words :

“ DEAR LADY MARTINDALE,

“ I do not like to be long away from Haldistow. My poor brother Dick is

very lonely and melancholy ; and I must not deprive him of the only society he has, bad as it may be.

“ I will not refuse you the loan of Kate, however, though I am always loth to part with her, and should feel lonely, too, if she were away when no one else is here. The best plan, therefore, will be for us to exchange children for a week. I will have your boy ; and you shall have my girl. I will bring her over on the 30th, i. e. the day after to-morrow, and drive back with Martindale on the following day. When he returns, I will return with him to bring Kate back. So you will have two sights of your old friend ; and that is as much as any one can desire of an old gentleman trenching hard upon seventy. Give my love to Alice, and tell her I quite forgot to propose to her before she went ; but all is not lost that is delayed ; and

“ I am ever hers and yours truly,

“ JOHN HALDIMAND.”

Lady Martindale smiled when she read the note, with her own peculiar, shrewd, little smile.

“Ho, ho, Sir John,” she thought, “so you have made a great heiress of your Kate, and think it worth while to keep her out of premature attachments! He looks for an earl or a marquis, at least ; but we women can match him. He little knows how a woman can be influenced by a woman ; and, if I have Kate here for a week, I must be very dull if I cannot settle the whole matter with her before the end of the third day.”

Lady Martindale, however, reckoned without her host ; and Lord Martindale was much disappointed with the arrangement. On the appointed day Sir John and Kate appeared at Martindale Abbey, and were welcomed most graciously. Lady Martindale was in her usual quiet, happy spirits ; and the young Lord himself, of course, expressed great delight at seeing the old baronet and his adopted daughter,

although he took an opportunity of telling Kate quietly that he thought it very unfair and unkind of her coming to stay with his mother just when he was about to be absent. Alice was sad and pale, but expressed what she really felt, a warm attachment to her fair young friend ; and Kate, who had really much regard for her, quietly watched her looks with a feeling of anxiety and alarm at seeing her so much changed within a few months. Nothing passed on the first day worthy of notice ; and on the following morning, Sir John and the young peer took their departure for Haldistow. Lady Martindale began her approaches cautiously ; walked, and drove, and talked with Kate, spoke of her son with all a mother's fondness, and skilfully made it appear that his tastes and habits were in exact conformity with those which she had discovered or supposed in her young companion. Kate drew very beautifully ; and Lady Martindale showed her some of her son's sketches, which were

• certainly masterly. He was fond of music, too, and sang a very good second. She pointed out all the improvements he had made in the place, which, it is true, were suggested by Gilpin, in the old Lord's day, and carried out by the head gardener ; but of neither Gilpin nor the head-gardener did Lady Martindale say a word. Kate seemed much pleased, and admired everything to Lady Martindale's heart's content ; and, satisfied with the achievements of one day, her hostess prepared to carry on the siege more closely on the following morning. However, a mine was sprung that night which rendered all her approaches vain.

The three ladies retired to rest early ; for the old clergyman of the parish had dined there, and had prosed Lady Martindale half asleep with an account of some disputes about tithes. Kate and Alice Richmond walked along the great gallery together towards their several chambers ; but Alice turned into Kate's room with

her ; and when they were there, they sat down to talk.

“ You don’t look well or happy, Alice,” said Kate, at length. “ I wish you would tell me what is the matter.” And she laid her hand affectionately upon that of her young friend.

Alice bent down her head ; and the blood rushed into her cheeks. The moment after she looked up, however, and said, with a sigh,

“ You are very happy, Kate. Every one loves you. No one cares for me.”

Kate was surprised. There is a sort of complaining spirit, which, seeking to monopolize all attention, and all affection, and being, of course, disappointed, is discontented and uneasy. There is another sort of spirit, of a lowlier and less grasping character, which, distrusting its own powers of pleasing, laments, though generally in secret, that it cannot win love or regard. But no trace of either the one or the other had Kate ever observed in Alice

Richmond, before her last visit to Haldistow. She had ever been a gay, cheerful, happy creature, tender and gentle, but yet occasionally firm enough. Women's eyes are keen, however, even in girlhood ; and several looks and words, Kate had remarked, especially when Lord Martindale spoke to her in low tones, or listened while she sang, which now returned to her memory, and gave some key, she thought, to the feelings which prompted Alice's reply. She paused for an instant, considering these things ; and then she answered,

“ You do yourself injustice, dear Alice, and others too. There are many who love you, and many who care nought for me, except in the way of common friendship.”

“ Oh, yes, every one loves you,” replied Alice, hastily. “ Sir John loves you. Lady Martindale loves you—” And then she added, with an averted look, “ and my cousin Martindale loves you, you know.”

Kate's cheek burned ; but she replied at once,

THE OLD OAK CHEST.

“ Indeed, Alice, I do *not* know it, and should be very sorry to believe it.”

“ Sorry!” exclaimed Alice, shaking her head. “ Sorry, Kate! Why should you be sorry?”

Kate paused an instant; but her resolution was almost immediately taken.

“ For very many reasons,” she replied. “ I am quite sure you are mistaken, Alice; but nothing could be more painful to me than to imagine you were right, as you will see at once, when I tell you, as I do frankly, that my hand is promised to another.”

Alice uttered an exclamation, which might almost be called a scream of joy; and then, casting herself upon Kate’s neck, she asked eagerly, but in a low and anxious voice,

“ Who? who, Kate? Tell me who?”

The poor girl forgot, that in the agitation she displayed, she was betraying her own secret.

“ That is hardly fair,” replied Kate, a

good deal moved ; “ but I will tell you, Alice ; for I see no cause for any concealment. It is to Colonel Charles Haldimand.”

“ Good Heaven, how blind I have been!” exclaimed Alice, musing.

“ I think you have been blind,” answered Kate, “ both in regard to me and to Lord Martindale. He is always very kind and polite ; but nothing more than the intimacy of our families might warrant.” (I am afraid Kate was here a little bit of a hypocrite ; but every woman is. So it cannot be helped.)

Alice’s mind, however, had gone off in another direction ; and her little wits were wandering upon dangerous ground.

“ What could be so natural ?” she said. “ You were brought up with Charles Haldimand, always looked upon him as your cousin ; and he of course could not help loving you, when he knew you so well.”

Kate smiled, saying,

“I do not exactly see the necessity, Alice ; and, indeed, you are not quite right in saying that we were brought up together. Ever since I was quite a little girl, the greater part of Charles’s time has been passed with his regiment. When at home, it is true, we were very much together ; and he was very fond of me as a child, when he was a boy at school. I have heard the old housekeeper say, that he would leave all other amusements in the holidays, to come and play on the floor with me.”

“O, he loved you from the beginning, I dare say,” cried the enthusiastic girl ; “and perhaps it was better that he was not always at home. If he had looked upon you always as a cousin, he might have loved you only as a sister”. And she sighed.

Mate felt that she was in some degree right ; but she was rather puzzled what to reply. Her own secret had been in a manner forced from her ; but Alice

had confessed nothing ; and, although Kate read plainly all that was passing in her mind, yet she did not feel herself competent to give advice, nor altogether willing to hear, in plain words, that which she perceived too well.

But the door of poor Alice's heart was open, for the first time for many months ; and the long pent up feelings, like a troop of prisoners set suddenly at large, rushed forth tumultuously. She told Kate all—with blushes and with tears indeed—but still the whole that was in her heart came forth : how, some six or seven months before, her noble cousin had spoken kind words to her, which she had misinterpreted to mean more than he had probably intended : how she had always loved him from her childhood, as a relation, as a sister ; and how those words, and the meaning she had attached to them, had awakened a still dearer affection : how, when he had relapsed into his usual tone towards her of calm, quiet, and she now called it, cold

regard, she had grieved with patience ; and how, when she had seen his evident admiration of Kate, her heart had sunk, and she had given herself up to despair.

Kate felt that she had a very difficult part to play, and feared that her inexperience of such things might make her play it badly ; but there is an instinct in a fine mind which guides it to the road it ought to travel, although it has never travelled it before. To encourage hope, when she saw no foundation for it, was what Kate would not do. She soothed ; she consoled ; and without exactly venturing to advise, she said that, if she were in her young friend's place, she thought she should endeavour to remove from the society of Lord Martindale, at least for a time.

“ Absence and other scenes,” she said, “ will relieve and refresh your mind, dear Alice ; and when you meet again, no one can tell how changed may be the feelings of each.” (Alice shook her head). “ Is there

no relation or friend," she added, "to whom you could go to spend a few months?"

"O yes!" replied Alice. "Lady Gerard, my aunt, I used to go to every year; but I have not been these last two years—I do not know why; but I did not like to go. She would be very glad to have me with her—but do you think it would be a good plan, dear Kate?"

"I do, indeed," answered Kate, simply. "I think it would be better in every point of view."

Alice held down her head and thought. There seemed something which she wished to say, but had not the power of saying; and the silence continued so long that Kate enquired—

"What is it, Alice? Can you not make up your mind to go? Nay, that is weak!"

"O no, it is not," answered Alice Richmond; "but I was thinking, Kate, whether you would mind my letting him know before

I went that your hand is promised to another."

Kate hesitated ; but she saw that it was impossible to say "No," though at the same time she did not wish it even to appear that the communication was in any way made at her desire.

"You can do exactly as you like, my dear Alice," she replied. "In telling you what I have told you, I laid you under no engagement to secrecy ; and you may tell any one you please. Of course it is a subject I do not speak upon when I can avoid doing so ; but you drew it from me by what you said. Only, dear girl, take my advice ; beware, in anything you say or do, of letting your own feelings appear too plainly."

Alice, as usual with the open-hearted and imprudent, firmly believed that she could conceal her feelings from all eyes but those to which she had just so completely revealed them ; and she assured Kate that she would be most discreet and

cautious. She went away well satisfied ; hope whispering to her, in spite of all her efforts to close her ears, that when her cousin found his affection for her fair companion could not be returned, it might revert to her.

The next morning, Alice was up early and seated with Lady Martindale in the breakfast-room for a short time before Kate appeared. From that moment, there was a change in Lady Martindale's demeanour towards Kate. It was perfectly courteous and, in word at least, kind ; but there are ways of showing, by indefinable shades of conduct and of language, that a person has become indifferent or even disagreeable to us whom we once courted and sought, and that without the slightest failing of politeness or attention. These ways Lady Martindale practised upon Kate from that moment forward. She was not a woman of violent passions or of violent action. Hers was what nine tenths of the world would call a well-regulated mind.

She sought her own purposes, served her own purposes ; but neither sought them nor served them with such vehemence as ever to forget what was lady-like in feeling as well as in thought. Her dear Kate was not made quite so much of as before. Lady Martindale did not put herself so much out of the way to show her fair guest her son's improvements, or make her aware of his abilities and high qualities. She went out at her usual hours, instead of a little earlier or a little later to suit Kate. She went about her usual avocations without much caring how Kate amused herself. She was rather sorry than otherwise that she had taken so much pains previously ; but she did not show it at all rudely, unless there be a rudeness—which I think there is in diminishing signs of regard and intimacy without any reason that we can venture to explain.

The cause of all this was simply that Alice had, in a quiet tone, communicated to her aunt the fact of Kate's engagement

to Colonel Haldimand. Lady Martindale found that she had been playing a game without calculating justly the cards which might be in the hand of the great player against us all, Fate, and that he had trumped her trick. In these circumstances, she only played out the game for courtesy, with every inclination in the world to throw down the cards.

Kate, for her part, felt the coldness, and had some faint and ill-defined notion of the cause. She suspected not one half the truth, however, only judging from all she had previously seen and from all she now felt that Lady Martindale had wished the union of her son and herself, and was disappointed on finding that it could not take place. That portion of the truth which she did not even suspect was, that Lady Martindale had only desired the union from a mistake regarding her inheritance.

To feel that she was coldly looked upon, however, was quite sufficient to make her

residence at Martindale Abbey unpleasant to her; and, though she was well pleased to see that Alice's light heart, easily depressed and easily raised again, bounded up like a feather on the wave, catching sunshine wherever it could, and that not only her spirits but her good looks returned, yet she wrote to Sir John Haldimand, expressing a hope that not more than a week would pass ere he took her back to Haldistow, as Lady Martindale did not seem quite so much delighted with her society as at first.

Sir John was punctual. He arrived at the Abbey just before the dinner-hour on the seventh day, and made the length of the journey—it was a long one in those days—an excuse for setting off before breakfast on the following morning. Lord Martindale was surprised and annoyed; but he knew his mother well—better than she imagined; and he saw at once, from her demeanour towards Kate, and the small effort she made to detain Sir John, that something had occurred to show that *the*

match was not so much an object of desire as formerly.

But to Lady Martindale's tender mercies we must leave him, and follow Sir John Haldimand and his adopted daughter back to Haldistow.

CHAPTER VIII.

WE must now pass over some months in silence ; for, as they flowed by, nothing much worthy of note occurred at Haldistow. Time was at his work, picking out the mortar between the stones of human life, sapping the foundations of the ancient buildings, covering them with the gray lichens of age, and preparing them for downfall by decay. Time was at his work, raising up the young shoot towards the tall tree, covering it with foliage, and teaching it to bud and blossom. Time was at its work, ripening the immature fruit, gilding the harvest-time of life, and promising

to every well cultured field in man's mind a bountiful crop. Time was at his work at Haldistow as well as over all the earth, building up and pulling down, perfecting and destroying, as he has gone on incessantly since the birth of the sun. He must be a very childish old man, that Time.

More early than usual in the following year, Mr. Greenshield appeared once more at Haldistow, and took up his abode, as before, at the Haldimand Arms, although he well knew that at both the Rectory and the Hall he would have been a welcome guest. But he went on just as before, chatting with Tom Notbeame in the evening when he found him in a loquacious mood, and letting him alone when the Demon of Taciturnity was upon him. He found Mr. Hush still in the service of Sir John Haldimand when he went up to the Hall; and not the slightest change was perceptible in that gentleman's appearance. He was as smooth, as quiet, as thin and as saturnine as ever.

Mr. Greenshield found Sir John a good deal changed ; but still a hale, healthy old man, clear in intellect, active, busy, thoughtful, and only complaining now and then of slight palpitation of the heart. Mr. Richard Haldimand was much changed, likewise. He had, moreover, some causes of anxiety ; for rumours had reached England of a great battle fought in India and he was without any recent news from his son.

Mr. Greenshield stayed only a fortnight at Haldistow ; but, during that period, he contrived to cheer and brighten the little circle in which he moved, and to increase if possible, the high esteem in which he stood with all around him. When he went away, he promised to return in the autumn, and then to spend a month at the Hall ; but all such engagements made for a remote period are, as the reader well knows, very vain things.

Time went by for well nigh half a year more, and brought one great anxiety with it. The rumours of a battle which arrived

from India by way of Constantinople, said to have been carried by Tartar couriers with almost incredible speed, gained ground. Everybody believed them in the Turkish capital ; and they were credited generally in England ; yet still, months, long months, had to pass before the details could be known. Those who had relations in the scene, lovers or friends, were condemned to the long torture of suspense—suspense that has the power to shadow the brightest scene, to make the sweetest music jar upon the ear, to put a nauseous drop into every cup of present joy, to transform the smile upon the lip, and check the gay beating of the heart. Happy, happy is it that the mind of man can abstract itself from the thought of all that is in the hand of fate—that we can turn the bright side of the minute to us without seeing for ever the gray shadow creeping round to darken all !

At length the period expired. Men with tin horns were adding to the roar of the

London streets, and screaming at the top of their voices, "Great News! Extraordinary Gazette! Glorious Victory!"

Oh, how many hearts thrilled at the sound! But apprehension was mingled with the thrill. A glorious victory, how many it makes desolate!

The gazette was sent down immediately to Haldistow by Sir John Haldimand's bankers and at his previous request. He opened it and read; and Kate, moving round, bent over his shoulder and read beside him. Sir John's eyes travelled more slowly than hers and were upon a different part of the paper when he felt a tear fall upon his hand, and then another. He started and turned round; then fixed his eyes upon a long list which occupied the third page, and was headed, "Killed and wounded."

Kate said nothing, but pointed with her finger to one part of the paper, where his eyes instantly lighted on the words, "Colonel Charles Haldimand, severely."

The kind old baronet drew her to him and kissed her cheek tenderly. "Let us thank God, dear Kate," he said, "that he is not amongst the killed. Perhaps, in looking through the details of the battle, we may find some farther information. As soon as we have done that, my dear girl, we will go down to Richard and break the intelligence to him if he has not got letters. We must not forget his grief and anxiety in our own."

In reading the dispatch, giving an account of the battle, they found that Colonel Haldimand's regiment had just arrived in time to take part therein, and had greatly distinguished itself; and that, in leading it on during a decisive charge, he had received two wounds which obliged him to be carried off the field. A farther report however stated, in regard to the wounded, that General —— had since died of his wounds, but that Colonel Haldimand and Major Graves were likely to recover. Some three weeks elapsed before any farther intelli-

gence was received ; but then letters arrived in Charles Haldimand's own hand. They were very brief and showed weakness of body in every line. Nevertheless the intelligence was favourable. He was recovering rapidly, he said, though he had been wounded in the leg and shot through the body. He wrote cheerfully and confidently, and added that by a ship, which was to sail in about a fortnight or three weeks, he hoped to send intelligence of his perfect recovery. A month elapsed however before these epistles were followed by others ; but the latter did not altogether relieve the minds of his anxious friends. He complained of the enervating effects of the climate ; and, although he assured his father and Kate that his wounds were rapidly healing, yet he admitted that he was still exceedingly weak and only able to crawl out for a little in the cool of the morning. One most gratifying announcement, however, these letters contained ; namely, that his retirement for a

time upon half pay had been arranged, and that in less than a month he should embark for England. He named the ship and the port of her destination ; and the expectation of soon seeing him again served to cheer the little party at Haldistow for the next week.

At the end of that time, on returning from a hot justice-room and a long ride, Sir John Haldimand was seized with violent pain in the side. The next morning he was worse. Doctor Porteus was absent on some business at a distance ; and the surgeon at Halcombe was sent for. He bled the baronet largely, perhaps indiscreetly ; and for several days Sir John remained very ill, attended by Kate and by his brother with the utmost affection. He recovered, however ; and by the time of Doctor Porteus's return was well enough to go out ; but he was still exceedingly weak ; and his strength came not again.

During his illness, Mr. Richard Haldimand would have suffered no considera-

tion to make him leave Haldistow ; but, as soon as his brother was convalescent, he announced his determination of setting out on the Monday following to meet his son in London.

“ You are right, Dick,” said Sir John, when he heard his purpose. “ I wish I could go with you, my dear boy.” He always called him boy, and perhaps in his heart thought him one, although Richard Haldimand’s hair was well nigh as silvery as his own ; but he had been but a boy when Sir John first found himself a man ; and he never could get over the notion. He added, however, “ I am weak, Dick, very weak. Otherwise, I and Kate would accompany you ; and indeed I do not see why she should not do so, as it is ; for I am well enough to spare my dear little nurse for a week or two.”

But Kate positively refused ; and for the first time in her life was a very disobedient girl ; for she would not listen to any arguments upon the subject—not even from her own heart.

The Monday came; and Mr. Richard Haldimand departed. During the morning Sir John walked out with Kate, leaning upon her arm; for his own was now too feeble to give her support. They visited several cottages, called and rested at a farm-house, and then extended their walk perhaps farther than Sir John's health could very well bear.

As they came homeward, they saw before them in one of the lanes near the park, the figure of Mr. Matthew Hush speaking to a man on horseback. There was nothing very remarkable in the fact; but yet, whether it was that the butler was more eager in his gestures than was common with so very quiet a person, or that it was an out-of-the-way place for holding conversations, they *did* remark it. The conference lasted not long, however. The horseman rode away in the direction of Haldistow; and Mr. Hush disappeared over stiles and through fields.

Returning to the Hall, Sir John com-

plained of being much fatigued. Kate did not put him in mind that she had more than once suggested he was going too far. He took up one of the small newspapers of that day, however, and read for a short time, but only a short time, before he dozed away in his chair. Kate sat quietly drawing while he slept, and made not the slightest sound. The sleep lasted for a full hour; and when Sir John woke he was a little confused, talked somewhat indistinctly on things long gone by, of which Kate knew nothing, and then rubbed his eyes, saying with a faint smile,

“I am only half awake yet. In my sleep I had gone back to times when your dear mother was but a child.”

It was the first time Sir John had ever mentioned the name of mother to Kate; and she gave a little start, but said nothing in reply.

Sir John soon brightened up, however; his ideas became as distinct as before; and the rest of the day passed as usual till din-

ner-time. Sir John did not eat much, for he had been directed to be very moderate in his food; and he took even less wine than the surgeon allowed him. After dinner, however, it being now autumn, he ate some fruit, of which there was always an abundant supply at Haldistow. It was much against Kate's will; and she ventured to remonstrate, reminding him that apricots always made him unwell. But Sir John had grown somewhat obstinate since his illness, and only laughed and ate another. Kate pressed him to take some more wine, as the surgeon had recommended it; but he would not do so; and then rising, he said,

“Come, Kate, let us go into the drawing-room, my love. This room has grown oppressive.” She saw that he moved very feebly, and went round and gave him her arm. Sir John leaned upon it heavily, more heavily at each step. Kate felt her heart beat with apprehension; for he was quite silent, and yet his lips moved. They

reached the drawing-room ; and Kate was stretching out her hand to draw nearer to her a large arm-chair, for Sir John seemed to be sinking, when he suddenly exclaimed, apparently with a great effort, “ Open the window.”

She drew the chair hurriedly forward, and with all her strength supported the good old man as he sank into it. The next instant his head fell forward on his breast ; his eyes closed, and his breathing became loud and difficult.

Kate sprang to the bell, rang it violently, and exclaimed, when Matthew Hush appeared, “ Send off to Halcombe directly, and let some one else see if Doctor Porteus is returned. Bid Mrs. Giles come to me. My father is very ill.”

CHAPTER IX.

It is always disagreeable to turn back in a story. Still, though there may be inconveniences attached to breaking off one thread of circumstances in order to take up another, yet it is sometimes necessary. So I must ask the reader to go over with me to the small town of Dingle, and to the quiet, gloomy, shady inn of the Silver Cross. In a long, awkward-shaped room, with two windows through which the beams of the sun never poured unless for about an hour, to paint a triangle of light upon the dark old panelling of the northern wall, sat Mr. William Haldimand through the whole of the live-long day. He did

not feel altogether well ; and the air would probably have refreshed him ; but he had not been out. On the contrary, sending for some books from a library, he had turned over many a page, to keep his mind from thought rather than to prompt thought. He read here and there in a desultory manner ; but still his own mind was busy all the time, and often would he lay down the book and, gazing on the black mahogany table, fall into a profound reverie.

“ There is no use in staying here,” he thought, at length. “ I only get moped and melancholy. John is getting quite well, there can be no doubt ; and my presence in the neighbourhood can be of no avail. As soon as the fellow comes back with news from Hush, I will order a chaise and be on my way to London. The very movement will tend to shake off this gloomy feeling.”

The fellow, as he called him, returned at about two o'clock, after having held a conversation, as we have seen in the pre-

ceding chapter, with worthy Master Hush amongst the lanes at the back of the park. The message he bore was an entreaty on the part of Hush that his master would not leave Dingle for a day or two. The health of Sir John Haldimand, he said, was completely broken. The pleurisy had left him ; but he was greatly enfeebled and did not get stronger. On receiving this intelligence, Mr. Haldimand paused for a few minutes to consider ; and then, exclaiming, in a sort of discontented tone, " Well !" he dismissed the man, who was a groom he had brought from London.

At the usual hour his dinner was served ; but his appetite was small ; the taste of the meat disgusted him, and the wine seemed fiery and acid. He wanted to drink more ; but he could not do it, so he sent away the dinner and ordered tea. Nothing seemed to put him in spirits ; he again took up a book, and forced himself to read and even to attend to what he read. It was a quaint old-fashioned work of a meditative

character which, in some places, was calculated to set a thoughtful and active mind wandering into abstruse discussions, sometimes inclined to agree with, and sometimes to dissent from, the author. But by far the greater part of the book was written in the strain of a man of the world, who only deviated now and then into higher and holier considerations from the power of thought carrying him above the sphere to which he sought to limit himself.

The part of the book to which Mr. Haldimand came about ten o'clock, was a general disquisition upon Time. After many observations on the uses of Time and upon its value, familiar enough to every thinking man, but set forth in a quaint and original manner, the author goes on to say,

“As every substance that God has placed at man's disposal has, besides the qualities which he knows and uses, many others which he never has discovered, or which he has never employed, so Time is full of valuable properties which we never

think of, or greatly neglect. Even its measurement into certain spaces by the alternations of night and day, the movements of the earth, the moon and the stars, might have much more beneficial effects upon man's mind than the common calculation of acts to be done, or of things recorded by what we call chronology, to say nothing of the warning of our own coming departure afforded by every day as it passes, which the great poet Shakespeare points at in his verses, where he says—

‘To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
To the last syllable of recorded time ;
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death.’

Intimations are moreover given by every periodical recurrence of certain times which would make man wise did he but take them to heart. Life is full of incidents which, if we note them for good, form a calendar of

remembrances well worthy of consultation as we go forward. Every great event in man's life, every worthy or unworthy action which he has done, with its admonitory results, everything that he has suffered, everything that he has enjoyed, has its anniversary well worthy of commemoration ; and how he might purify his life, amend his conduct, enlarge his heart, and elevate his mind, were he but to keep the birthdays of his acts with rejoicing or sorrow, according as experience shall show him their good or evil, let any one who has seen fifty summers say."

Mr. Haldimand laid down the book. It troubled him. It prompted thoughts which he had been seeking to avoid. It led his mind back to a period long past—to things which had been done and suffered on that day many years before ; and which, notwithstanding all the angry resistance of pride, and all the smooth glossing of vanity, he could never dwell upon without bitter regret and a shadowy feeling of

penitence and remorse. Now the shadow grew defined and clear, like a spirit separating itself from the darkness of the night, to wake him to ineffectual grief. He paused and contemplated the past with fear. He called to mind all the circumstances and all the events of that day one and twenty years. The lost and the dead rose before his eyes ; the angry passions which had moved him stood around, softened, indeed, and silent, mere images of what they had been ; but yet dark, and awful, and repulsive. He could not call them into active influence to steel his heart as in the time past ; but he knew that they had existed. He asked himself, Is it possible that I could so feel, and that I could so act ? There was the germ of the sorrow that leadeth to repentance. He longed to undo the irrevocable ; and, even while he strove to find excuses to justify to himself the vengeful sternness with which he had treated others, he felt that the recoil of the weapon had inflicted on

his own heart a wound that even the great physicians, Vanity and Pride, could never wholly heal.

The burden of his thoughts was very great ; and he turned to the book again for relief. He passed over a page or two ; but what his eyes now lighted on was not more satisfactory than before.

“ I would have all men,” said the author, “ on every memorable occasion note, as in a book, what they do, and consider it afterwards that day year, and so on from year to year, through their life. Let them do so ; and how different will the deed of to-day appear a twelvemonth hence—how very different when twelve twelve months have run by ! The passions which affected us shall have been subdued ; the prejudices which dimmed our sight shall have been cleared away ; all the self-justifications which man builds up for his worst actions out of distorted facts and perverted applications, shall have vanished away like smoke when a fire is extinguished ; and

though we can never judge of our own doings as we would those of other men, yet shall we see them more clearly, and discover the hidden faults and flaws which often bring misery, and ruin, and desolation, out of what we conceive our justest actions and our best devised schemes. I have known a father disinherit a son and cast him off for certain offences, and, when the youth was dead, discover from the examination of his own motives and his own actions that the offence was in him and not in his child. It may be said that this was a sorrowful, but not a serviceable discovery, since there was no mending that which had been done amiss. Nay, but it was serviceable ; for not only had the father other children, but it taught him to deal leniently with all men ; and his heart was chastised by the error of the past. I have known a man——”

But Mr. Haldimand laid down the book again, and, rising from his chair, paced up and down the room, with his hands clasped

together and his eyes bent on the ground. Heavy struggling sighs burst from his bosom ; and once involuntarily he spoke aloud, though there was no one there to hear. All he said was—

“Ay, this day one-and-twenty years ! How different do things seem now ! Where can Henry be that he has never written ? Dead perhaps, dead too, and I left alone in the world !”

He sat down again and remained more than an hour with his hand shading his eyes, and his mind given up to bitter contemplation. It may be asked whether, such as we have painted him, cool, calculating in his schemes, passionate, vindictive, malevolent in his resentments, he was now suddenly and all at once changed ? No, reader, no. It was just the same man, but under a different aspect. Even with the coldest and the most selfish there are times when remorse and penitence will have power. Human passions indulged, like tame tigers, will sooner or later turn to

rend the hand that feeds them ; and the sharp tooth is felt when we see that the acts from which we derived an instant of angry satisfaction, leave behind them an age of misery and regret.

For many years, that day had never returned to Mr. William Haldimand, without bringing gloom and bitter burning of the heart. It was the darkest day of all the year for him, when his own spirit told him that acts of relentless severity, on which he often prided himself in public, had secretly smitten the root of happiness in his bosom, and left the tree of life well nigh barren of all sweet fruit. But let us not be mistaken. Let it not be supposed that Mr. William Haldimand was either changed or amended. He might regret, bitterly and remorsefully regret, the past ; but the past had no effect upon the present with him. The same feelings unchastised, the same passions uncontrolled, reigned in his bosom now as then ; and, although he thought that he should act differently,

were the opportunity afforded him, and felt a sort of remorseful desolation in knowing that no opportunity could ever come, yet it is very doubtful, whether he would not have done just as he had done, could the same circumstances have presented themselves again, with all the experience of the present.

It is true, indeed, each year, when that day came round, it came with greater and greater bitterness ; and this night especially, the words that he had read seemed to add terribly to the load upon his heart. After passing, as I have said, more than an hour, in as dark and painful thought as had ever visited him during life, he rose to retire to rest, and had just reached his bed-room, when the landlord himself hurried up, and knocked at the door.

“ Come in,” said Mr. Haldimand, sharply ; and the good man entered with a letter in his hand.

“ A lad has brought this over from Haldistow, sir,” he said, “ with orders to

deliver it to you directly, and even to wake you, if you should be gone to bed."

Mr. Haldimand took the letter eagerly, and instantly recognized, in the address, the handwriting of his good friend, Mr. Hush. He did not open it at once in the landlord's presence; for he knew, as Bacon expresses it, that "there be many wise men that have secret hearts and transparent countenances;" and he was afraid that the emotions produced by that letter might be too apparent.

"Let the boy wait," he said. "I will ring in a minute or two." As soon as the landlord was gone, he locked the door and opened the letter.

Marvellous was the change which the few words it contained produced—a change not only in the outward appearance of the man, though he turned pale and trembled with the violent agitation produced by the fulfilment of long-endured desires, but a change in every thought and in every feeling. Where now was the voice of

remorse? Where now was the remembrance of all those pangs, which gratified vengeance and stern vindictiveness had inflicted on his own heart? Where were the purposes of being gentler, milder, more considerate for the future? Where were the longings to repair the injuries he had done, the bitter sorrows he had occasioned, the fierce, relentless punishments which he had inflicted on small faults? Gone—gone to the winds. He was triumphant. The power of striking, the rod of vengeance, seemed in his hand; and he prepared to use it without mercy.

The letter was very short; but it was explicit and conclusive.

“HONOURED SIR,

“I beg to inform you that this evening after dinner your brother, Sir John, was visited by a stroke of apoplexy. He is still living; but the surgeon, for whose arrival I have delayed my letter, informs me that there is no chance of his surviving

many hours. I have acted in all things according to your instructions in the circumstances, and made everything quite safe. I will let you know the instant any change takes place ; and then your presence may be immediately needful.

“ Should you judge it expedient to discharge the principal servants immediately, which might perhaps be judicious, I think it would be better to dismiss me amongst the number, with some marks of displeasure. This will put a bar against all doubts. If I might suggest, also, it would be well to bring over Sir John’s lawyer with you, which will have a good appearance.

“ My next letter shall be public and open ; but in the meantime I send this by a boy who lives at three or four miles’ distance, whose father keeps a pony and is an old friend of

“ Honoured Sir,

“ Your most faithful servant,

“ MATTHEW HUSH.”

“ P.S.—Miss Haldimand is in very great affliction.”

“ Curse her, the flattering jade !” exclaimed Mr. Haldimand, as he read the last sentence. “ Now it is *my* turn ; and I will make her pay bitterly for all the grinding anxiety she has inflicted on me. She has revelled and triumphed long enough ! She must needs marry peers on the strength of supplanting me and mine, must she ? We will see whether any peers will marry her when she is a wandering outcast. But I must send this boy back.” And he rang the bell.

It was the landlord who appeared again ; but, by the time he came, Mr. Haldimand had smoothed his countenance, and seated himself carelessly in a chair.

“ Ask the boy what he charges for bringing the letter, Crosley,” he said to the landlord ; “ and, if he asks what is moderate, pay him. Let me be called about eight to-morrow, and have my usual break-

fast ready by nine. I shall now go to sleep."

If he expected sleep, he was disappointed. He lay upon his bed and thought. At first the fierceness of his satisfaction deprived him of repose ; and then doubts and apprehensions, vague and uncertain, but still terrible, came to disturb him. " Might there not be another copy of the will ?" he thought. " Perhaps the lawyer had it. Sir John was a man of business and of careful habits."

All these and many other such imaginations disturbed him greatly ; and it was not till within an hour of dawn that he closed an eye. Then, however, he slept heavily, and did not dream.

CHAPTER X.

WE must return to the scene of sorrow, though not to dwell very long on the most sorrowful part thereof. Sir John Haldimand was removed to his bed-room by the assistance of three or four of the servants ; and Kate stood by his bedside during the absence of the servant who had been sent for the surgeon. Oh, that long and painful watching, how terrible it is, when a faint hope yet lingers, and we say in our heart, "He may still be saved !" And yet every moment, as it flies, we fear will extinguish the faint lingering spark before the charitable hand comes to fan it back into a flame. To stand by the sick bed of one we love,

to look upon his agony, to see life waning lowly away, and death "advancing his pale standard" over the face and brow—to know nought that can alleviate, to be ignorant of what is best to be done, to see no means of beating back the enemy, and yet to believe that such means exist, is surely one of the most dark and awful acts of human life. Yet such was the case with poor Kate. All she could do was to stand and watch by the bedside of him who had been more than a father to her, who had cherished her infancy, loved her in her girlhood ; who, without one claim, even conventional, on her part, had taken her to his heart as a child, and never ceased his bounties or his love till he lay there before her, pale, senseless, with life waning fast, and she no power to help him.

For some time she had little or no assistance ; for the housekeeper had gone down to the village to see a poor woman who was sick ; and the ordinary maids of the house were even more incapable of

giving help than poor Kate herself. At length, however, Mrs. Giles returned ; and then there was a good deal of active and fruitless, though perhaps not useless, bustle. She did what common people and many country apothecaries do in what they call a fit. She brought harts-horn ; she sprinkled the good old man's face with water ; she had all the windows opened. But she might as well have sprinkled the water on the marble or admitted the fresh air into a tomb. The hand of death was upon Sir John Haldimand : the fiat had gone forth ; and he was to look up no more.

He still breathed, however, long and heavily ; and at the end of little more than an hour the surgeon arrived. He said that the patient must be bled immediately. The lancet and the bandages were accordingly drawn forth ; the arm tied up ; and Kate raised and held the powerless hand. An incision was made ; but no blood at first flowed ; and it was not till after chafing

the limb that the dark red stream began to pour forth. It produced no relief, hardly any change. The lips grew somewhat paler ; but that was all. The eyes did not uncloze ; the breathing was not less laborious ; no movement of the features took place. The surgeon shook his head sadly. He was a kind, good-natured man ; and, taking Kate's hand in his own, he said—

“ My dear Miss Haldimand, I fear I can give you very little hope. I will do my best, believe me ; but I think you had better retire from a scene that may be too painful for your feelings.”

“ Not for a moment,” replied Kate. “ I will stay with him, sir, as he would have staid with me.”

She knew that those emotions must be little worth which could banish her from the death-bed of one she loved. She felt this, rather than thought it ; for it was no time to think of, or to speak about such sensations, and she said nothing on the subject.

The wearing anxiety of the next ten hours, who shall describe? Death came not so soon as he had been looked for. The struggle of the strong man against the great enemy was hard and protracted. Long and heavily-drawn was each breath. There seemed no change, either for the better or the worse. For an hour or two, the surgeon went on steadily and perseveringly with the application of all those means which he thought might have some effect. I will not weary the reader with any of the details. They served but to tear the heart of poor Kate, as she saw one thing tried after another, and all ineffectual. She continued to sit by the bed-side during the whole live-long night, and saw the dawn come in at the windows, which no one thought to close, and mingle its blue clearness with the yellow candle-light. Her eyes were hardly off the sick man's face a moment; and at length, while old Mrs. Giles was nodding in a chair at the foot of the bed,

and the surgeon's eyes were half closed with the drowsiness of watching on the opposite side of the bed to that at which Kate was seated, she suddenly exclaimed,

“He is better. He is moving his lips, as if he would speak.”

The surgeon started up, and put his fingers on the pulse. The breathing became more soft and gentle ; the chest rose and fell lightly, once, twice, thrice. Then a sudden and vehement shudder passed over the old man's frame, and his eyes opened ; but light and intelligence had departed thence ; and the spirit had fled to God, who gave it.

Not a word was said. No intimation was wanting to Kate of what had taken place. She had never seen death before ; but she recognised it at once. He was gone, the friend, the protector, the father ; and, sinking on her knees by the bed-side, she hid her face upon the covering and wept bitterly. O, how desolate, how sad, how lonely did her heart feel at that mo-

ment! She almost fancied that she had not loved him well enough in life, from the intensity of affection which she felt for him at the moment of his death.

After allowing her to indulge her grief for a few minutes, the surgeon whispered a word to Mrs. Giles, who was weeping likewise; and the old lady laid her hand upon Kate's arm, and said,

"Come, my dear child, come. He has gone before us to Heaven. Let us trust that we shall reach the same place too, and have as calm a parting as he has had. It will be better for you to come away. You have staid with him to the last, and can do no good now."

Kate rose from her knees, took one last look through her tears, and suffered the old house-keeper to lead her away. Mrs. Giles walked with her to her room door; and there Kate paused for an instant as if she wished to speak. It cost her a struggle to find words; but at length she said,

"I wish somebody would send a messen-

ger to Mr. Richard Haldimand. Write him a few lines, Mrs. Giles, I am unable ; but he should know of this event immediately. Say that I shall be better in the evening, I dare say ; and then I will write by post."

"Where am I to send to, my darling?" asked Mrs. Giles. "I know he is in London ; but I do not know where."

"I do not know to what inn he has gone," said Kate, with a feeling of sudden alarm and anxiety. "My poor father knew ; but I never inquired. They must know, however, at the Rectory," she added, after a moment's thought. "Send down and inquire ; for indeed he ought to be informed at once."

Mrs. Giles saw her into her room, and then left her. She sent down to the Rectory ; but the servants there were ignorant of their master's address. She looked over the papers on Sir John's library table, but gained no information with regard to Mr. Richard Haldimand's residence in town ; and, thinking it a pity

to trouble Kate upon the subject, at such a moment, she put off speaking of the matter till the afternoon.

Others, however, were more provident. Sir John Haldimand had not been dead above three hours and a half, when a post-chaise and four, at furious speed, dashed up to the great door of the Hall. Kate heard the prancing of the horses, and the rolling wheels ; but she lifted not her head, as it rested on her hands, and gave no attention to the sounds which succeeded.

Mr. Hush, however, was more attentive. He had caught the roll in the distance before the chaise passed the lodge gates ; and, ere the bell was rung, he was at the glass door. William Haldimand, now Sir William, was already on the top step, and walked straight in.

“ ’Tis all safe, sir,” whispered Hush. “ You can seal up everything in perfect security.”

Mr. Bigood, the lawyer, followed Sir William Haldimand slowly out of the

chaise, and entered the house with a solemn air. He was really grieved. He had lost a good client, and a good friend, a man whom he respected, whom he had been accustomed to look up to from his own youth as good Sir John Haldimand ; and his face showed the feelings of his mind. William Haldimand's countenance was also very grave, but more stern than sad. If any one had asked him if he grieved, he very probably might have answered—

“No ; why should I grieve for one with whom I have been at enmity for thirty years ?”

Several servants hurried up to the entrance-hall ; and, marching on in silence, Sir William Haldimand entered the drawing-room, and said, turning to Mathew Hush—

“Send for all the servants.”

He then seated himself at a table, and remained in gloomy silence till some eight or nine persons were assembled in the room. The lawyer had, in the mean time,

seated himself at a little distance, looking uneasy ; for, to say the truth, his conversation in the postchaise with Sir William Haldimand had not been altogether of the most agreeable description. The new baronet had assumed a domineering, petulant, irritable tone, which formed a very unfavourable contrast to the well-remembered gentle dignity of his brother ; and Mr. Bigood's only consolation was that Sir William's pride was likely soon to receive a check.

The baronet put on his spectacles ; and, turning sharp to the lawyer, as soon as he thought the auditory sufficient in number, he said, looking at him hard in the face—

“ You tell me, sir, that my late brother had made a will, that you drew it, and know where it is deposited. As the part I have to play here must entirely depend upon the nature of that will, and as probably my brother made some arrangements which may require immediate attention, I beg you will have the goodness to produce the document.”

"It is usual, on these occasions, Sir William, to wait till the principal relations and friends can be assembled ; but, as you are, undoubtedly, Sir John's next heir, I see no reason—."

"I want neither reason nor reasoning, sir," interrupted Sir William Haldimand, in a dry, hard tone. "I want you to produce the will, if you have got it in your pocket, as I suppose, or if you know where it is to be found."

"I have not got it in my pocket, Sir William," replied Mr. Bigood ; "but I certainly do know where it is deposited ; for not five days ago I received this note from the late Sir John Haldimand, which, if you will permit me, I will read." And he proceeded while the servants stood around, all agape, to read as follows :

"MY DEAR SIR,

"I think you saw me lock up the will, and know where it is to be found ; but I have been very ill, and feel that

health is failing, life passing away ; and, to guard against any delay or mistake, I write to tell you that the will, with the codicil, are both in the white envelope sealed with black, in the great oak chest in my study. My brother will find it there with several other papers which he had better take care of.

“ Yours truly,

“ JOHN HALDIMAND.”

“ By the words, ‘ my brother,’ ” added Mr. Bigood, “ I feel certain that Sir John alluded to Mr. Richard Haldimand.”

“ That is an interpretation, sir, which I shall not suffer you to place upon the expression,” said Sir William Haldimand. “ But to save all cavil and objection, I shall not examine any of the papers the chest contains, or go near it at all till you produce the will, when we may perhaps more clearly see which brother Sir John alluded to. Will you have the goodness to fetch it? Two of you men go with this gentle-

man—not you, Master Hush,” he continued sharply, as the worthy Matthew took a step forward. “I am not at all pleased with your conduct in leaving me and never returning to my service when you were well. You have shown me great ingratitude, sir, after all I have done for you.”

“I am very sorry, sir, if I have offended,” said Hush, in a respectful tone; “but I was only going to say that Sir John always kept his keys in the drawer of the large table, and that the key of that drawer is attached to his watch.”

“Let the watch be brought,” said Sir William Haldimand.

He had no scruples. He neither remembered nor cared that the watch was to be brought from the chamber of death, or even, for aught he knew, taken from the very person of his dead brother. They went away and brought him the watch. It was a large, old-fashioned gold watch, richly embossed; and, what possessed him, I cannot tell, but he looked at the face of it.

and saw that the hands had stopped at three o'clock. Death had staid the hand that wound it up for forty years. It was like the body and the soul. The main-spring was there. All the wheels and chains and escapements, they were all there; but that which gave it motion and activity and the power of marking hours and minutes—that was gone. It was like the face of the dead.

Imagination is a strange thing. How it is excited in one man by one thing, and in another by another! The sight touched some particular cord in William Haldimand's breast; and fancy or memory, or something, I know not well what, was aroused at once. Perhaps it awakened the thought of his own death—made him think of the time when the hands on life's dial would stop for him also; and William Haldimand did not like the thought of death. He gave a sort of shudder, and put the watch sharply down upon the table. The jar roused some little power in the spring;

the works began to move. You could hear it tick upon the ear. The second-hand moved jerking on for three quarters of a round: then stopped again; and all was still. Everybody present kept a dead silence; and Sir William Haldimand leaned his head upon his hand and thought. The next instant he roused himself again. Internally, he called himself a fool, and resolved to be harder still; but he merely said, taking the key roughly from the ring to which it was attached,

“There, sir, there. There is the key. Take it, and bring me the will. I authorize you to do so, as the next heir and next of kin to Sir John Haldimand.”

“Very well, sir,” replied Mr. Bigood, taking the key. “I do it—I must not say, under protest—but not without remonstrance; for I warn you you are not one of the executors of the will.”

Sir William Haldimand waved his hand angrily; and the lawyer, followed by two of the men-servants, quitted the room,

leaving the doors between the drawing-room, the library and the study, all open behind him.

With a frown upon his face and his eyes bent motionless on the table, Sir William Haldimand sat waiting for the result. Lucky for him that his bosom was not of glass, or a dark sight would his heart have presented at that moment.

For some time the silence was quite uninterrupted ; but then a murmur of two or three voices was heard, one of which seemed to speak in accents of surprise.

“ They have not found the will,” thought Sir William Haldimand ; and he listened attentively to catch the sounds, but without removing his eyes from the table. The sounds ceased ; and the succeeding silence continued long—long enough to trouble the new baronet ; but he consoled himself by thinking : “ They are searching further.” In a minute or two more Mr. Bigood entered the room. He had a slip of what seemed freshly written paper in his hand,

which he put in his pocket, and a key, but nothing else ; and he said, in a calm, firm, grave tone : “ There is no will there, Sir William.”

“ No will !” exclaimed Sir William Haldimand, with well affected surprise. “ You are not deceiving me, sir, I trust.”

“ No, upon my honor,” replied Mr. Bigood. “ I could have no possible object in doing so. I am as much surprised as you can be ; but the servants can bear witness that I examined every packet which the chest contained. They are all carefully enveloped, sealed and docketed, with the contents marked upon each ; and the will is not amongst them.”

“ Then my brother must have burned the will,” said Sir William Haldimand ; “ and I am the proprietor of Haldistow. Give me the key, Mr. Bigood.”

A slight shade of hesitation came over the lawyer’s face, as if he had taken a resolution which he was half afraid to carry

out ; but after a moment's pause he replied :

“ I beg your pardon, Sir William ; but I am afraid I must decline to comply with your demand.” And he then added, with very particular emphasis, “ That the late Sir John Haldimand never *did* burn his will, I am perfectly convinced—as certain as I am of my own existence. In that will, I now beg to inform you, he appointed as his executors, your brother, Mr. Richard Haldimand, and a gentleman of the name of Greenshield. He may have given the will to either the one or the other for greater security, after writing to me the note I have read you. But at all events, none of the papers in that chest can belong to you ; for they are all addressed to other parties. The principal title-deeds of the estate are deposited with me ; and I shall surrender them to whosoever makes out a legal claim to them ; but in the mean time I shall keep this key also, and deliver it to Mr. Richard Haldimand in your presence,

if you please ; for the greater part of the papers in the chest are addressed to him."

Sir William Haldimand's eyes flashed fire ; and all the angry passions of his nature were roused. He started up from the table, as if he would have seized the lawyer by the throat, exclaiming :

" Detain that key, sir, if you dare !"

The stout old coachman, who was in the room, and who had been for thirty years in Sir John Haldimand's service, fancied that the new baronet was about to proceed to acts of personal violence ; and, thrusting himself suddenly before the lawyer, he exclaimed—

" Hallo, none, of that, Master William ! Lawyer Bigood is very right ; and I'll stick by him."

" And so will I, and so will I," said several other voices.

" My good people, my good people," cried the lawyer, who knew better what he was about ; but he could not obtain silence ; for

the coachman was oratorical, and his blood was up.

“ I say lawyer Bigcod is quite right ; and I’ll stick by him,” he repeated. “ We all know quite well Sir John never intended you to have a penny, Master William. He didn’t like you well enough ; and I’ve no notion of your coming down here and kicking up a row before the breath is well out of my poor master’s body. Will it be agin the law, lawyer Bigood, if we turn him out ?”

“ Decidedly,” replied the lawyer. “ It will be an assault. Till it is proved otherwise, Sir William is Sir John’s personal representative, and has every right to act as such. I keep this key on my own responsibility, knowing the contents of Sir John Haldimand’s will, which, I doubt not, has been given to one of the executors. In these circumstances,” he continued, seeing that the tumult was a little appeased, “ I would suggest to Sir William Haldimand

the propriety of sealing up all the receptacles for papers, &c., in the house, and waiting before he removes the seals for the arrival of one or both of the executors I have named. In the meantime, he can make all the arrangements for the sad ceremony which must shortly ensue."

While the lawyer was speaking, a meaning glance had passed from the shrewd eyes of Mr. Matthew Hush to those of Sir William Haldimand. It might be interpreted : "There is no use in putting yourself in a passion. It is all quite safe."

It calmed Sir William much ; and the coachman, whose eloquence was exhausted, had retired a step, still grumbling.

"Am I to understand you, sir," demanded the baronet, seating himself again, and employing a far milder tone, "that you have a copy of my brother's will?"

"A rough copy I have, sir," replied the lawyer, "but not signed. No duplicate was ever signed that I know of, though it is a precaution I should have recommended,

had my opinion been asked. However, I feel justified in taking the course I have taken, and making the suggestion I make, being perfectly certain, as I have said, that Sir John did not destroy the will. He was not a person who acted upon sudden caprices."

Sir William Haldimand's determination was already formed ; but nevertheless he affected to consider for a moment or two ; and then, raising his head, he remarked—

" Well, sir, I am quite ready to act upon your suggestion. I can have no motive for wishing to look at any papers before my brother's return, except to ascertain what directions may be left regarding the funeral."

" That I can tell you, Sir William," replied Mr. Bigood. " His only directions upon that point, were, that the funeral should be as plain as was consistent with his station and fortune."

" Well, then, I see no reason, sir, why we should not proceed at once to affix the

seals as you have proposed," said Sir William Haldimand.

"If such be your pleasure, sir," replied the lawyer.

A light, sealing-wax, and strips of paper were provided ; and through the whole of the lower part of the house the new baronet and the lawyer walked, affixing their seals upon every drawer, secretary, or chest which could be supposed to contain papers of any kind. Two servants followed them, carrying the implements, and witnessing the transaction ; and all the rest dispersed.

There is one circumstance, however, which I must not omit to mention. Sir William Haldimand was shrewder than the lawyer. I do not mean to say that he actually at that moment intended to remove any of those seals, or to examine any of those repositories ; but when the slips of paper were placed across the openings of the drawers or of the doors, he sealed the one end and the lawyer the other. It

would have been much safer had Mr. Bigood used his own seal throughout. Perhaps he never thought of doing so ; but even if he had, he might have found it very embarrassing to make the proposal.

When all was done below, they sent for Mrs. Giles, the housekeeper, who had been for a time in the drawing-room with the other servants, but had not exchanged a word with William Haldimand, though she had known him from his youth. Grave, tall, and stately she now re-appeared, and asked Sir William's pleasure. He directed her to accompany himself and Mr. Bigood through the upper rooms which Sir John was at all accustomed to use, and in which any papers were likely to be preserved. He spoke in a dry, unpleasant tone ; and good Mrs. Giles had a strong inclination to dispute his authority in the house. She led the way in silence, however, up the great broad staircase to the corridor above ; and, proceeding methodically to the long window which gave it light at one end, she

opened a door on the right and another on the left for the lawyer and the baronet to enter.

Hitherto she had not spoken a word ; but, when they were in the right hand room she said, coldly—

“ The drawers and cabinets are all empty. These are visitors’ rooms.”

Sir William Haldimand satisfied himself, however, that she spoke the truth, by opening one of the cabinets. At the doors of the two next rooms she made the same announcement, but paused before the fifth door, saying, with very significant emphasis,

“ This is the room and dressing-room of Miss Haldimand, heiress of Haldistow.”

William Haldimand gave her a glance, as if he would have cut her heart out ; but she added, without the slightest change of tone or expression,

“ She is in very great grief. I presume you will not think of intruding upon her.”

Sir William paused for an instant, with

feelings in his breast that made his heart beat fiercely. The presence of the lawyer, however, acted as a restraint for the time ; and all he replied was, " Go on !"

Mrs. Giles walked forward, and opened another door.

" In this room," she said, " Sir John used sometimes to read early in the morning. I do not know what it contains, besides the books."

The lawyer and the baronet paused there, and sealed up two cabinets and several drawers. At the next door they came to, Mrs. Giles paused for a moment, but then opened it without a word. Mr. William Haldimand walked straight in, though the lawyer seemed to hesitate. The windows were all closed, except a small portion of one shutter, which was ajar, near which sat a woman servant, working with her needle, who rose the moment they entered. Two large full-length portraits, exquisitely painted, hung on the opposite side of the room ; and, on the

right hand side of the one, and the left of the other, was a large japan cabinet. A large table, a smaller one, some chairs with embroidered seats and backs, a washing-stand, some china vases, some phials and glasses on one of the tables, and a large bed, with rich damask curtains, were also in the room. With a soft and noiseless step, as if he were afraid of waking somebody, Mr. Bigood followed Sir William Haldimand; and the two men-servants came after him. They all looked towards the bed; but Mrs. Giles, with her slow step, and her creaking high-heeled shoes, advanced straight to the bed-side, and drew back the curtain.

“Here, sir,” she said, in a low but distinct voice, “is the body of your late brother, Sir John Haldimand: as good a man as ever lived. Perhaps you may like to look at him. It may do you good.”

Sir William Haldimand muttered something, of which the only distinct word was “Woman!” and Mrs. Giles, without heed-

ing him, turned to Mr. Bigood, who had approached, and said,

“How calm, and mild, and sweet he looks!”

“He does, indeed, Mrs. Giles,” said the lawyer. “One would almost say he was in a tranquil sleep.”

“And so he is, if the good sleep peacefully,” replied the old woman. Drawing the curtain again, she retired to the window, and said a few words to the maid who was standing there.

For at least two minutes, Sir William Haldimand stood in the middle of the room with his eyes bent upon the floor. Perhaps there was a struggle in his breast ; for there are few, very few, in whom even a long life of selfishness is able to stifle entirely the first pure, fresh feelings of the heart. Perhaps the memory of other years spoke out. Perhaps conscience reproached him for the acts he had just done or caused to be done. It was too late, however, to change them. They could not be recalled. The barrier

had fallen behind the darkest step of all ; and there was no going back. If there was such a struggle, his after conduct showed that the evil spirit gained the complete victory.

At the end of that long pause of thought, he resumed his occupation with a sudden start, and then descended again to the drawing-room. When there, and in the presence of both Mrs. Giles and the two men-servants, he turned to Mr. Bigood, saying—

“I need not detain you longer, sir. I myself shall remain here till my brother Richard’s arrival. So that you can take back the post-chaise. In the meantime, in ignorance of what dispositions Sir John Haldimand may have made, I shall act in all the melancholy arrangements which must follow, as my late brother’s next heir, next of kin, and personal representative.”

“In that, sir, you will be perfectly justified,” replied Mr. Bigood ; and, with a low bow, he withdrew.

CHAPTER XI.

SIR WILLIAM HALDIMAND was left alone in the drawing-room, where he sat in dark deliberation for some minutes. In the meantime, however, a grand council was held in the servants' hall—to which all the servants who had been called into the drawing-room retreated as they had been dismissed from the new baronet's presence. John, the coachman, had been the orator of the party, as we have seen ; but almost every one present had felt very much as he had felt ; the sensation of indignation being of course greater in those who had been longest with Sir John Haldimand, than in the rest.

“ I can tell you what, my good fellows,” said John, as soon as the greater part were assembled, “ I shan’t stand this. It is too bad when master is just dead—and such a good master too—to have this man coming in and ordering about him just as if everything was his own. Why, he behaved shameful to Sir John ; and I can recollect it quite well ; and Sir John would never leave him a penny, I’m sure, ’specially when there’s our young lady—and such a nice, easy-going young lady, too.”

“ She’s quite a lady,” said one of the footmen.

“ As sweet a creature as ever was seen,” said the head housemaid.

“ Why, John, what do you intend to do ?” asked the second footman.

“ I’ll go,” said the old coachman, stoutly. “ I’ll give warning at once. I shan’t be long out of place, when once my young lady comes into the fortune ; and she’ll have it too—you’ll see. I won’t be driving that

fellow about in master's carriage ; and I do hope skittish Jenny, the young chesnut mare, will kick him to atoms if he puts his foot in the phaeton."

" Fie now, fie John," said the head housemaid. " You should not wish harm to any one. There, don't be angry. I only want to cool you down a bit—just to throw about some tea-leaves like, when the dust 's raised."

" I shall go too," said the head footman. " Thank God, I can afford to be out of place for awhile. Sir John was a good master ; and one could save money in his house ; for one never wanted for anything."

I should have noticed that neither Mrs. Giles nor Mr. Hush, were present at this confabulation ; but the latter entered the hall just at this moment ; and the whole party became silent instantly, not very well knowing what view he would take of the matter.

" Well, my good friends," he said, in his

quiet mellifluous voice, gliding up to the top of the large table, "I am glad to have found you altogether ; for I wish to bid you good bye. We have now lived a good many months in the same house, and have got on very smoothly. I have never had to find fault or to complain of any one ; but, after what Sir William Haldimand thought fit to say to me to-day, of course I cannot stay any longer. Servants and masters never get on after once there has been a rumpus ; but, when a gentleman chooses to tell a head servant who has always done his duty, that he has behaved very ill and been very ungrateful, they had better part ; and the sooner they part the better."

"That's like a man of spirit, Mr. Hush," said John. "I've just come to the same notion ; and I'll go in and tell Sir William so this minute."

"Do everything respectfully, John," said Matthew Hush, with a sapient look. "It is always right to be respectful to one's masters, however ill they may behave to us."

“Master! he’s no master of mine,” replied John. “Sir John Haldimand was my master; and as he is dead, I have none now.”

“He’ll be very angry,” said Mr. Hush, thoughtfully, “if he finds all the superior servants inclined to go.”

This was highly satisfactory to several of those present; for nothing could have given them greater pleasure at that moment than to make Sir William Haldimand angry. But Mr. Hush continued, saying,

“You had better let me go in and take off the first fire, John. I know how to manage him, so as to make him smart a little, without giving him anything to take hold of.”

This proposal was also agreeable; for they thought that, when the matter was once begun, the battle was half won. Mr. Hush accordingly retired from the servants’ hall; and the council continued to sit during his absence. It was divided into two sections, however; for the inferior servants, not being so completely independent

as those who had lived long with Sir John Haldimand, did not like the idea of losing place and perquisites.

On entering the drawing-room, Mr. Hush found the baronet still buried in thought. It was the first opportunity they had had of conversing together; but yet Sir William did not notice his faithful servant for several minutes, during which time Matthew Hush continued to stand before him in profound silence.

At length Sir William looked up, and said,

“Well, Hush. It is destroyed?”

Hush nodded his head, merely saying,

“No trace of it is left, sir.”

“I should like to know,” said Sir William Haldimand, thoughtfully, “what are the other papers contained in that chest.”

“There is the key, sir,” said Matthew Hush, laying on the table a key which had been evidently subject to the operation of a file.

Sir William Haldimand took it up, and put it in his pocket, saying,

"Can you not tell me what they are, Hush? You must have seen them."

"I did not look very far, sir," replied Hush; "for I thought it better not to move things more than needful; but there is one large bundle of old parchments, tied up with red tape, and a packet on which is written, 'Correspondence with my brother William,' and another smaller packet addressed to The Rev. Mr. Haldimand, and another to Miss Haldimand. But, I beg your pardon, sir, I have something else to say, if you have leisure."

"Well, Hush, what is it?" asked his master.

"Why, sir, it is about a little hint I gave in my letter last night. I think you may find the presence of the superior servants here very inconvenient. You may have to look over a great many things; and some of them will be sure to be hanging about."

"I will clear the house of them," said Sir William Haldimand.

"I thought so, sir," said Hush; "and so

I have prepared the way for you. I found them all in a state of rebellion, just now, in the servant's hall; and I poked the fire for them a little, in order that the fault might lie upon them. Master John, the coachman, and two or three others were quite ripe to give warning; and I told them I should do so too."

"But I may want you, Hush," said Sir William.

"I cannot be of the slightest service to you now, Sir William," said Hush. "If you should hereafter require my services, of course they are always at your command, sir; but it would look much better now if you were to turn me off in a huff, as if you did not care the least about me."

Some farther conversation of this kind passed, which ended in a violent ringing of the bell. The head footman appeared at its summons; and once more Sir William Haldimand sent for the principal servants. He named them, however,

in so sharp and angry a tone, that the man instantly perceived a storm was brewing, and communicated the fact to his companions, who made up their minds to retort doggedly if the new baronet thought fit to use any harsh terms towards them.

When the head coachman, the head groom, and the two principal footmen made their appearance in the drawing-room, they found Matthew Hush still standing before the baronet, with eyes abased and head bowed, the picture of meek and suffering innocence. They had no great time for consideration, however ; for Sir William addressed them at once.

“I find,” he said, “that you and this ungrateful scoundrel, Hush, have been caballing together in the servants’ hall against myself, the heir of your late master. Such a set of insolent and pampered fellows shall not stay in this house a moment longer. You are all of you discharged ; and I give you notice to quit the premises before nightfall.”

“ Very much obliged, Sir William,” said

the coachman. "If you had not discharged us, we should have discharged you. You would have found it a difficult matter, I can tell you, to get any of us to stay in a house where *you* are master. But you'll be so good as to pay us our wages first, with a month in lieu of warning. Here's my book, where you'll see how the account stands."

"You shall be paid, fellow," said the other, now really enraged. "I will begin with Master Hush, however. What sum is due to you sirrah?"

"I must bring my book, Sir William," replied Matthew Hush; "and perhaps you will tell me to whom I am to give up my keys, and with whom I shall go over the plate, of which I have an inventory."

"With myself, sir," said Sir William Haldimand, who did not think the precaution altogether unnecessary, as he was well aware that Mr. Hush's fingers were like the bottom of Ali Baba's measure, to which pieces of gold and silver had a propensity

to stick. "Fetch your book, and I will settle your account at once ; for I will have the house quit of you as soon as possible. In the mean time, give me *your* book, coachman."

During Mr. Hush's absence, which was of some continuance, the worthy baronet examined the accounts of each of the servants he had sent for, paid them by cheques upon a neighbouring banker, and dismissed them with a repetition of his warning to quit the house before nightfall. Perhaps, had they known exactly how to set about it, they might have felt themselves inclined to resist this latter mandate ; but each man rubbed his head and cogitated without perceiving clearly on what he could found a refusal. John, the old coachman, felt an almost irresistible inclination to throw the new baronet out of the window ; for he had an ancient grudge against him, having been terribly pelted and bespattered by the William Haldimand mob at the county election. A very few irritating

words would have worked him up to do it ; but Sir William did not speak them ; and the man went away grumbling. Mr. Hush's accounts and other affairs were settled between Sir William and himself alone ; but in the mean time the discharged servants proceeded in a body to the housekeeper's room, to inform Mrs. Giles of what had taken place. She was not there ; but the still-room maid told them that she was gone up to Miss Haldimand, and would soon be back again. They accordingly waited round the door till her return, when the conduct of Sir William was related to her with plenty of very angry comments.

Poor Mrs. Giles was astounded and bewildered.

“ I could not have believed,” she said, “ that any gentleman would act in such a way. We are not accustomed to such doings, my good friends. I am very sorry for you indeed ; for, although I dare say none of you would care to stay

with him, yet the turning you out in this way, at a moment's notice, is very hard upon you."

"I've a great mind not to go, ma'am," said John, the coachman; "for I don't see what right he has; and, if any one goes, I think it ought to be hisself."

"Oh, you had better go, John," said Mrs. Giles, in a kind tone. "You might only get yourself into trouble. You heard what Mr. Bigood said, that he has every right to act as Sir John's heir, and make all arrangements till the will turns up. Where will you go to, my good friends? The public-house in the village is not a fit place for such people as you."

"Oh, dear, no, ma'am, I shall go to Tom Notbeame's. There's good 'commodation there," said the coachman. "He's an honest fellow."

"So shall I," said Stephen, the footman. "There's room for us both, John, I dare say."

"I shall go down to Halcombe," said the other footman.

“And I shall go over to my father’s,” said the head-groom. “’Tis but a step of seven miles ; and I dare say Tom Martyr will lend me a nag.”

“And what does he intend to do with Mr. Hush ?” asked Mrs. Giles, a slight shade of suspicion crossing her mind. “I suppose he is to be kept on.”

“Lord bless you, no, ma’am,” said the head-footman. “He’s worse with him than with any of us, more grim and grisly-like. He called him a scoundrel, and all manner of things, though Mr. Hush was quite quiet and respectful, and did not let it put him up at all.”

“He was quite right,” said Mrs. Giles. “It would do no good, and might do harm, to show any temper.”

The men still lingered, as if they had something more to say ; and at last the coachman, after settling and unsettling his wig twice, brought forth the thought which was in the minds of each, by saying—

“I suppose, ma’am, we could not see our young lady, just to wish her good bye?”

“Not to-day, my good John,” said Mrs. Giles. “Poor thing! she is in very great distress, and has hardly ceased weeping for a minute during the whole morning. I have persuaded her to lie down, and try to get to sleep; for she never closed an eye last night. I have not told her a word of what has been going on. So that she only knows Sir William Haldimand is here, and that surprised her enough. But if she were to hear how he has behaved, and especially that he has turned all his brother’s old servants out of the house, I do think it would break her heart.”

“God bless her!” said John, warmly. “Pray tell her, ma’am, how sorry we were to go without seeing her; and say that it would be the proudest day of my life to sit before her again when she comes to her own, which she will do yet for them all.

I would rather drive her than any lady upon earth, be the other who she may."

"I will tell her, John, depend upon it," said Mrs. Giles; "and you may be quite sure she won't forget you. In a day or two you can all of you come up to see her."

"That we will, ma'am, that we will," said the servants, and then took their leave to make preparations for departure.

Mrs. Giles mused, after they were gone. The conduct of Sir William Haldimand puzzled her. She knew him of old; and she knew that he was violent, vindictive, merciless. But she had always thought that he was too selfish and calculating to do anything outrageous or indecent. A conversation which ensued between her and Mr. Hush about an hour after, did not serve to enlighten her at all; for that gentleman only shrugged his shoulders, vowing that he believed Sir William had gone mad.

“ He used, from time to time, as long as I have known him,” said Mr. Hush, “ to get into terrible tantrums with my poor mistress, and with his daughter, and Mr. Henry, sometimes. Indeed, I may say, he killed the two first with wretchedness ; and Mr. Henry he has made what he is, by worrying his life out. But I never knew him let himself down to abuse servants before. You can’t think what bad language he gave me ; and I am not bound to bear that. Bear it or not bear it, however, he gave me my discharge on the spot. So I will just get ‘one of the helpers to carry my things down to the lodge, and send for them when I have found some place to sleep in. ‘Pon my life, this is treating one like a dog, to kick one out in this way. However I don’t want to stay a minute after all he has said.”

When Mr. Hush had left her, Mrs. Giles turned her mind to the consideration of whether she should or should not tell Kate what had occurred. There were now left

on the establishment the under-footman (a mere lad), the under-coachman, who acted as an occasional groom, another groom, and two helpers in the stables. But as all the maids were left, Mrs. Giles imagined that Kate would not perceive any difference, at least for a day or two, by which time she trusted that Mr. Richard Haldimand would arrive. Mrs. Giles, however, knew not what was preparing for herself. Sir William Haldimand's groom, who had come with the post-chaise, was seen wandering about the house during the next two hours, making observations and giving orders in a somewhat impertinent manner. He had been once or twice to the drawing-room ; and at length, on his directing something to be done out of the usual course, of which Mrs. Giles did not approve, she ventured to ask if he had his master's orders for his conduct.

The man answered saucily, and went back to the drawing-room ; but he did not return to the good housekeeper for more

than a quarter of an hour. By this time, Hush and the other discharged servants had taken their departure ; and at length, about three o'clock, Mrs. Giles was sent for by Sir William Haldimand. To her, his manner was less rude than it had been to the men ; but he spoke in a stern and determined tone, to show that he would carry through all he had resolved.

“ I have two or three things to ask,” he observed, “ and two or three things to say. Pray what female servants are there in the house ?”

“ Myself, sir,” replied Mrs. Giles, “ two housemaids, a still-room maid, the cook, the kitchen-maid, the under kitchen-maid, or scullion, the housekeeper’s-room maid, and Miss Haldimand’s maid. These are all who are actually in the house ; but at the laundry and the dairy, there are three laundry-maids and two dairy-maids, besides some young women about the farm who attend to the poultry and things of that kind.”

“ A goodly establishment !” said Sir William Haldimand, with a sneer. “ Quite a seraglio, upon my word. We must diminish this number of ladies. In the first place, the cook must be discharged. The kitchen-maid will do quite well, I dare say. If she is a very fine lady, she must have the scullion, I suppose. The head dairy-maid, one housemaid, the house-keeper’s-room maid, the still-room maid and also one laundry-maid must be discharged directly. You will have the goodness to give me an account of wages due to them, which I will pay at once.”

“ Do you mean *now*, sir ?” asked Mrs. Giles, in a tone of unutterable surprise.

“ Yes, now, directly,” answered Sir William Haldimand.

Mrs. Giles raised her head two or three inches higher ; and it cost her a great struggle to speak calmly.

“ I will beg of you, Sir William,” she said, at length, with the dignity of a princess, “ to consider the very great im-

propriety of turning a number of respectable young women out of the house in which they have lived for some years in such a manner as this. Where are the poor creatures to go to ? The friends of some of them live at a considerable distance. One of them, the still-room maid, has no friends. She is an orphan ; and I must say——”

“ Keep what you have to say for yourself, my good lady,” interrupted Sir William Haldimand. “ Your eloquence will then be better employed. I am not a man to alter my resolutions, as you ought to know ; and it is my intention to turn out some respectable *old* women as well as respectable young women, before this day closes.”

“ O, very well, Sir William. I understand you,” said Mrs. Giles ; “ but you will remark, it is now three o’clock ; and it is impossible for me to render my accounts to-night. Nor shall I even attempt to do so.”

“ That matters little,” said Sir William Haldimand. “ We will examine your ac-

counts another time ; but, in the meanwhile, you will have the goodness to take your departure as soon as may be. You are discharged. Do you understand me ? I am well aware of much more than you know ; and a person who has back-bitten and maligned me to my brother, encouraged him in his grossest folly, and thought fit to be insolent to me on my first appearance in this house, shall not sleep under the same roof with me.”

“ Sir William Haldimand,” said Mrs. Giles, with that true dignity which conscientious rectitude can only give, “ I am a woman—an old woman—and therefore can be insulted with impunity, and be compelled to yield to commands which you have probably no right to give. I have no power of resisting, though I am not aware by what authority you act ; but, nevertheless, I will not submit in silence to accusations that are false, nor give you any help in doing wrong to others. I have never maligned or back-bit you to Sir John

Haldimand ; for he knew your character well enough without requiring any one to comment upon it. Neither have I encouraged him in any folly ; for I know none that he ever committed. He was a wise and a good man, sir, who lived and died loved and respected by all except one brother. Hear me out, if you please, sir ; for I don't often talk much ; and answer you I *will*. In regard to the other servants whom you are pleased to discharge, I will have no share in dismissing them. I engaged them by Sir John Haldimand's orders ; but I know of no power or right that you have to send them away at a moment's notice. You must do the dirty and ungentleman-like act yourself, if you are inclined to do it."

With all his wit, violence, and determination, Sir William Haldimand actually quailed before an old woman of seventy-two ; and his only reply was a vehement exclamation of—

" Get out of the room and the house !"

“ I shall do so when I have finished all my arrangements, locked up all the stores, and given the keys to the lady who has been accustomed to act as my mistress,” said Mrs. Giles. “ I suppose you will not think of putting me out before. If you do, it must be by force.” And, thus saying, she walked slowly out of the room, her shoes creaking as she went.

Her courage had not failed her for a moment in the conflict ; for indignation kept her spirit up. But, when she reached her own room, the old woman burst into tears, and exclaimed—

“ Poor Miss Kate ! This bad man will attack her next, I am sure. But, thank God, his reign can’t last long.”

CHAPTER XII.

KATE was asleep. Worn out with emotion, more even than with fatigue, the earthly comforter had come, had closed her eyes, refreshed her frame, calmed her mind. She lay tranquil and dreamless in utter exhaustion, when a gentle touch on the arm woke her with a start.

The old housekeeper was standing beside her, with tears in her eyes. They were tears, drawn forth by the thought of being forced to wake that sweet and gentle creature from her quiet slumber, to fresh sorrows and anxieties.

Mrs. Giles had pondered for some time on what it would be best to do. She re-

membered that Kate was not aware of her never having written to Mr. Richard Haldimand, on account of the want of his address—that she was ignorant of all that had taken place since Sir William's arrival—knew nothing of his dismissal of the servants, nor of the prospect of her having to stay some days almost alone with him in that house.

Mrs. Giles felt a dread of Sir William Haldimand. She looked upon him as a sort of demon, moved by passions, in her eyes unaccountable, to actions the most wild and strange, so that she could never calculate what he would do next ; and, though she had resisted him valiantly, yet she feared him nevertheless. It seemed to her necessary to put Kate upon her guard ; and, at all events, she could not avoid telling the poor girl of her dismissal from the house.

The good old woman had prepared to do all this quietly, in order not to frighten her young lady too much ; but the sight

of Kate sleeping so calmly, and the necessity of waking her with a tale of fresh sorrow, overpowered the housekeeper ; and she wept.

“ What is the matter, dear Mrs. Giles ?” said Kate, holding out her hand to her. “ Has anything fresh occurred ?”

“ Yes, indeed, my dear,” said Mrs. Giles. “ A great deal has happened which I must tell you, though I grieve to do so ; for it can only vex you. Sir William Haldimand has come.”

“ Yes, you told me so,” said Kate. “ I suppose he must have been accidentally in the neighbourhood, and heard of our terrible loss.”

“ I don’t know, Miss Haldimand,” replied the housekeeper. “ I have my suspicions ; but, at all events, *he* does not seem to think it a terrible loss. He and lawyer Bigood have hunted for poor Sir John’s will ; and it cannot be found.”

“ It is in the great oak chest in the study,” replied Kate, calmly. “ My poor

father told me so only yesterday morning."

"It is not to be found there now, my dear child," said Mrs. Giles; "and Sir William Haldimand takes upon himself as if he were the heir of every thing. He has sealed up all the drawers and cabinets, and gone through the whole house except this room."

"Well," said Kate, with a sigh, "he must do as he pleases, till dear Mr. Haldimand comes, which will not be long; for I am quite sure he will set off the moment he hears the sad news, and lose no time by the way."

"But, my dear," said Mrs. Giles, "that is the worst part of all. I have not been able to write to Mr. Haldimand, because the servants at the Rectory do not know his address. He said he would give them information as soon as he ever was settled at an inn in London."

Kate was now really anxious and distressed; but more because she feared that Mr. Haldimand might hear of his

brother's death in some harsh and unsoftened manner, than from any apprehensions regarding herself. But she was soon taught to change this view by the information which Mrs. Giles proceeded to give her. The whole story was, at length, told, namely, that almost all the servants, had been discharged and turned out of the house ; and that the good old housekeeper herself, who had been a mother to her in her childhood, and a fond and affectionate, though humble friend, through life, was now compelled to leave her.

Kate was terribly agitated and alarmed. Although Sir John Haldimand had seldom or ever mentioned his brother's character and conduct in her presence, and never with that reprobation which they deserved, she had heard enough from others to make her look upon Sir William with the utmost dread and aversion. She rose slowly from her bed ; and, sitting down at the table, gave up a few moments to that anxious,

confused, bewildered thought, which comes to the mind of the inexperienced when difficulties, sudden and unexpected, fall upon them. Her first impulse was to fly ; to accompany Mrs. Giles to Halcombe, where she intended to take up her abode for a time, and to leave Sir William in undisputed possession of everything. But a moment's consideration made her abandon that purpose. She remembered that the body of him who had been a father to her was lying near. She recollected the ties which bound her to the family of Mr. Richard Haldimand. She thought, too, over all she had heard of her own history ; and she judged that it was a duty to herself—to the dead—and to the living, to remain where she was, at the risk of any pain or annoyance.

What should she do ? How should she act ? were questions which recurred again and again ; and first, as regarded her residence in the house, she determined not to quit her own apartments till the arrival of

Mr. Richard Haldimand. She then thought, "I will write to him directly, enclosing it to my poor father's bankers, informing them of the sad event, and begging them to forward my letter immediately."

Still it might be long before Mr. Haldimand received the letter ; but, as she was contemplating this probability with a sinking heart, the image of Mr. Greenshield suddenly rose before her mind, and seemed instantly to give her light and hope. She knew the place of his residence. The distance was not above eighty miles, while to London it was nearly double ; and she felt what an inestimable blessing it is to have a friend.

"After these two noble fruits of friendship (peace in the affections, and support of the judgment)," says Bacon, "followeth the last fruit, which is, like the pomegranate, full of many kernels ; I mean aid and bearing part in all actions and occasions." It was the two last-named fruits that Kate hoped now to gather ; and she clasped her

hands together, with a look of relief at the very thought.

“I will tell you what I will do, dear Mrs. Giles,” she said. “A very happy idea has come to me. I will send off at once for Mr. Greenshield. Sir John appointed him one of his executors and one of my guardians ; and I promised I would apply to him in any moment of trouble or distress.”

“There could not be a more needful one, my dear child,” replied the old housekeeper ; “and he is a good, kind, wise gentleman as ever I saw or heard of. But how are we to get at him ? for a letter may be a long time reaching him by the post.”

“I will write the letter at once,” said Kate ; “and you must send it for me by some one. The man can take a horse ; and let him go as fast as possible.”

Mrs. Giles mused ; but she suffered Kate to write the letter, which she did rapidly and clearly, though with a trem-

bling hand. She watched her while she sealed it and wrote the address ; but then came out the difficulty which had been slumbering in her mind.

“ Where can we get a horse, I wonder ? ” she said. Kate started ; and the old house-keeper went on in the same meditative kind of way, saying : “ I know of none in the village fit for such work except Tom Martyr’s ; and he has lent that to the groom.—This man will never let you have one out of the stable for such a purpose, I am sure.”

“ There is my own horse,” said Kate, “ of which he cannot deny me the use. It was given to me by my uncle Richard, and therefore is my own. He cannot pretend to take that from me. The only thing is to find somebody to carry the letter.”

“ Oh, *that* I’ll find, my dear child,” said Mrs. Giles. “ There are plenty of people who would carry a letter for you if they walked the whole way. But the thing is

to have it delivered quickly. That's a good idea about the horse ; for we can all testify it is your own, and that Mr. Richard bred it and trained it for you. But it's hardly strong enough, I think, to go all that way at once."

"He can take it part of the way, and then hire another," said Kate ; and she took out her purse to give part of the little store for the payment of the man's expenses.

"No, no, my dear, never mind about money," said Mr. Giles. "I have plenty in hand of poor Sir John's ; and there's no harm in spending that for such a purpose."

"Pray get it off as soon as possible, dear Mrs. Giles," said Kate, putting up her purse again. "I will write, too, to Mr. Haldimand to-morrow ; for it seems to me growing dark ; and the post must have gone out."

"It is indeed growing dark, darling," answered Mrs. Giles ; "and I must go too ;

for, if that man finds me in the house, we shall have another scene, and I can't well bear it. I have got a cart waiting in the court to take me and my things to Halcombe. I never thought to travel in a cart ; but it may be no better."

It was a sad parting between Kate and her old friend ; and, when the housekeeper was gone, the poor girl felt herself utterly desolate. Mrs. Giles, however, did not quit Haldistow Hall till she had had a conference with one of the helpers in the stables, a good active lad in whom she could trust ; and, in five minutes after, the youth was mounted on Kate's jennet and riding out of the court-yard.

" Hallo ! where are you going with that horse, you sir ?" exclaimed Sir William Haldimand's groom. " What do you mean by taking a horse out of the stables without master's knowledge ?"

" What's that to you, you jackanapes ?" replied the boy from the horse's back. " I'm taking out my mistress's horse where

my mistress tells me to go ; and if you are saucy, I'll give you such a lathering when I come back, that you won't need another for a twelvemonth ;" and away he rode, pretty nearly as fast as he could go.

"It's Miss Kate's own horse, master," said the under groom of the Hall, "given to her last year by Mr. Richard Haldimand ; and the boy is carrying a letter from her to Mr. Greenshield, one of her guardians, I hear. So neither you nor any one else, belonging to your master, has anything to do with it."

Now Sir William Haldimand had all his life looked upon his servants in some sort as retriever dogs, and always taught them to fetch and carry. His groom, therefore, retreated at once into the house ; and, in a moment after, was knocking at the drawing-room door.

CHAPTER XIII.

WHEN Mrs. Giles passed the door of the Haldimand Arms, very few rays of light were left in the sky; but still the master of the house was standing at his gate, with both his hands in his pockets, and John, the coachman, and Stephen, the footman, were talking to him. Be it remarked, I say, talking *to* him, not talking *with* him; for Tom Notbeame answered never a word. His face was full of thought; and, though his shaggy eyebrows were knit and curled together in a somewhat forbidding manner, the expression had more of reflection than anger in it.

As Mrs. Giles looked at the group in the faint light, she doubted not at all that

the two men were giving their host all the details of what had happened at Hal-distow; and, as she knew Tom Notbeame well, she was not surprised to see the silent coolness with which he heard the story. As soon as he perceived the cart, however, and made out the figure of the person who was in it, Tom Notbeame's immobility was suddenly dissolved.

"Hallo! what's this?" he exclaimed, at the same time throwing open the little gate of the garden. "He's done a thing or two more, it seems."

With a quick step he approached the side of the cart; and, looking up in the face of Mrs. Giles, for whom he had a great respect, he leaned his arms upon the wood-work, saying,

"I am sorry to see this, ma'am."

"Ah, Tom, it's a sad business," said Mrs. Giles, wiping the tears from her eyes. "It is a sad business altogether. It began with death; and it goes on in anger and sorrow."

“ Ah, ma’am, it *is* a sad business,” replied Tom Notbeame. “ We shall never see a Sir John Haldimand again; but as for that, he was an old man; and I was quite sure, when I heard last night that he was taken ill, he would never recover. It was clear enough; for a great old raven came and sat on that tree just about six o’clock, and went bowing its head up and down, and croaking, as happy as a prince. The raven didn’t come there for nothing. But what I was talking of, was Master William’s coming down and turning everything topsiturvey. He must have as keen a scent for death as a raven, to be just at hand to jump in.”

“ It is very strange, Tom,” answered Mrs. Giles; “ and I have my doubts.”

“ I have no doubt at all,” answered Tom Notbeame drily; “ and I know more than I shall speak. So he’s turned you out too, ma’am.”

“ He has indeed,” answered Mrs. Giles. “ For myself, I don’t care; but it grieves

me to leave poor Miss Haldimand in her deep distress."

"I'm sure it does, ma'am," replied the landlord, with a sort of absent manner. "And so the will can't be found? That would have settled all, I should think."

"It certainly is not where Sir John said he had put it," replied the old housekeeper. "I should have doubted the fact, and supposed that somebody might have made away with it, if it hadn't been that Mr. Bigood was sent to search the chest, the great oak chest in the study, where I know it was placed, and that Sir William Haldimand was never near it himself."

"Ha!" said Tom Notbeame; and then, after a long pause, he asked, "Don't you think it strange, ma'am, that Master William should send the lawyer and not go himself with him, and should send two servants as witnesses, and not be a witness himself? Don't it look very like as if he knew no will would be found?"

"Why, how *could* he know?" asked Mrs. Giles.

“Ay, ma’am!” answered Tom Notbeame. “That’s what I’ll find out before I’ve done. I’ll have some talk with him before this night’s over.” Then, suddenly breaking off the thread of his discourse, he added, “I can’t bear to see you going in a common cart, ma’am; and I’d offer to drive you anywhere you are going in my gig, but that I know you love Miss Kate better than yourself; and I may want the gig in her affairs.”

“I do indeed, Tom,” replied Mrs. Giles. “But pray take care, my good man, what you do; for you can’t imagine how violent Sir William is.”

“I don’t care whether he’s violent or not,” answered Tom Notbeame. “I’d give him a hiding as soon as look at him. Only I think I can do better than that; and I know what I’m about in this business at least. People wouldn’t believe me when I told them; and Sir John gave me the first hard words about it I ever had from him; but I’ve not watched my man for nothing;

and now he shall find, as the Bible says, I've got my hook in his nose. Don't you be afraid, ma'am. I'll do it all quietly; but, work it out I will, one way or another; and I'll set about it this very night."

"Well, Tom, well, you must do as you please," answered Mrs. Giles; "but I must go on now to Halcombe; for it will be quite dark an hour before I get there."

"I suppose you couldn't put up at my poor place?" said Tom Notbeame; "for as to John and Stephen here, one can have the little room, and one can have my room; for I sha'n't be in bed all night. So that you could have Mr. Greenshield's room, ma'am; and he used to say it was very comfortable."

Mrs. Giles, however, had made her arrangements for going to Halcombe; and she declined. Her notions of prim propriety might indeed interfere to prevent her taking up her abode in a public house frequented principally by men; but at all events she had set out to go to Halcombe; and to Halcombe she went.

As soon as she was gone, Tom Notbeame halloo'd to his boy to bring out the gig ; and then, turning to the coachman, he said—

“ I'll tell you what, John, you had better go with me, perhaps, if you don't mind. I'm going to have a word or two with Master William ; and I should like to have some one within call if there should be occasion.”

“ What are you going to say to him, Tom ?” asked the coachman.

“ Why, I shall say to him,” answered Tom Notbeame—

“ ‘ You that executors be made,
And overseers eke,
Of children that be fatherless,
And infants mild and meek,
Take you example by this thing,
And yield to each his right,
Lest God, with wrath and misery,
Your wicked minds requite.’ ”

“ That'll do, that'll do,” said the coach-

man, rubbing his hands—"couldn't be better, Tom. I think that'll touch him up with a crack on his flank."

"I think it will," said Tom Notbeame. "Now, boy, make haste."

In a few minutes, Tom Notbeame's chaise or gig was at the door, and he and the coachman were seated in it. They exchanged not a word till they had passed the gates of the park; for the coachman was meditating on Tom Notbeame's driving, and thinking it odd that the reins should be in anybody's hands but his own; while Tom was cogitating profoundly, revolving all that he had to say to Sir William Haldimand, and making up his mind to the labours of eloquence.

As soon as they had passed the gates, however, the coachman observed, in a low tone—

"I'd drive up to the great door on the terrace, if I were you, Tom, as you are going to pay him a visit, like."

"No, no," answered Tom. "That won't

do, John. It's always better to throw your fly at once just before a fish's nose, and not to let him see you till he's hooked. The people might keep me out if I went to the great door, and asked for him like a gentleman. They might say he was engaged, or something. I shall just drive into the court, walk through the servants' hall door and about the house till I find him, without asking any questions of anybody. Nobody has ever stopped Tom Notbeame going about Haldistow house when he likes ; and I should not like them to begin to-night ; for see him I *will*."

On second thoughts, the coachman approved of this plan ; and it was accordingly executed. The gig rolled quietly into the courtyard ; and, while the under groom came out of the stables at the sound of wheels, and talked with his old friend, the coachman, who remained in the chaise, the landlord of the Haldistow Arms quietly walked into the house ; and, finding nobody in the servants' hall, for the house-

hold was awfully thinned, he went straight on along the passage which passed between the housekeeper's room on the one side, and the still-room on the other, mounted two steps and opened a door, which led into a sort of vestibule, whence stairs leading to the second story went off on both sides. There was another door exactly opposite ; and through that, Tom Notbeame passed, when he found himself in the great corridor, just opposite Sir John Haldimand's study. He passed it and the library, however, and only looked into the dining-room, where, by the light of two candles, the fragments of a meal appeared on the table ; but nobody sat there.

“ He must be in the drawing-room,” thought Tom Notbeame ; and he walked along the corridor to the door of that room. There he heard a voice, speaking in what seemed a sharp and excited tone ; and he paused for an instant, saying to himself—

“ He must have somebody with him.

Well, I don't care who hears." And he opened the door.

Tom Notbeame's fit of eloquence had been rapidly melting away, and taciturnity was making a strong struggle for it ; but he was resolved to go through with the matter ; and he advanced boldly. Much to his surprise, however, he found Sir William Haldimand quite alone, but walking up and down the room with his face a good deal flushed, and talking to himself very vehemently.

As soon as Tom entered, the baronet stopped, gazed at him from head to foot, and then asked, sharply—

"Who the devil are you ? And what do you want ?"

"Come, come, Master William," said Tom, in a determined tone, "that won't do. You know who I am well enough, though we are both a sight older than when last we met ; and you look as if you had been hooked and landed, and left in the sun to dry. What do I want ? I want you to do right and justice."

The only thing which kept Sir William Haldimand from bursting with rage, was utter astonishment ; but a faint recollection of the face before him began to gain upon his mind, although, when last he had seen it, it was that of a mere youth ; and he replied, in a calmer tone than might have been expected—

“Is your name Notbeame ?”

“Ay, I’m Tom Notbeame,” answered our friend. “But I want to know whether you intend to do justice to my young lady, Miss Kate.”

Sir William Haldimand’s rage now broke forth. He cursed and swore in an awful manner, gave his visitor a number of unpleasant names, interlarding his objurgations with repeated demands of how the devil he presumed to meddle with things that didn’t concern him.

This fit of passion was of the greatest possible use to Tom Notbeame ; and, having listened for several minutes in profound silence, he answered, in a voice so loud and strong as to drown the torrent of

invective which the baronet was pouring forth—

“What do I mean by meddling with this! I tell you, Master, it *does* concern me. Why, I know all about it!”

“About what, fellow?” demanded Sir William Haldimand, again giving way to astonishment.

“Why, about the will,” answered Tom Notbeame, in the same loud tone, “and its disappearance, and all your damn’d trafficking with Master Hush, and your coming down, and having him over to Dingle—and your poking about there, and sending your damn’d groom over to get news, while poor Sir John was ill, and all the letters that came and went between you, and all about it, and how the will went.”

Never let any one say that Tom Notbeame was not the most eloquent man in the world; for this speech, I take it, was one of the greatest oratorical efforts ever made. It showed that he knew a great deal, gave the impression that he knew a

great deal more, and completely concealed how much he did not know.

The first effect upon Sir William Haldimand was tremendous. For an instant he was cowed by fears in his own heart suddenly called up in arms against him. Every possibility of detection, every chance of exposure and shame and punishment, flashed upon his mind like a blaze of lightning over a desolate scene. But then, the moment after, he said to himself—

“It cannot be. The will is destroyed. He may excite suspicions, but nothing more. There can be no proof.”

It was all rapid and hasty, a sudden struggle in the mind between hope and fear, while he knew not which to listen to ; and then, like many a man would have done, he took refuge in a new burst of rage.

“Get out of the house !” he exclaimed, “get out of the house !” And he rang the bell furiously.

"Then you won't do justice by fair means, master?" said Tom Notbeame, not caring for his wrath a straw.

"Get out of the house!" repeated Sir William, foaming with passion.

"Then you shall be *made* to do justice!" replied Tom Notbeame, turning away and meeting the groom at the door.

"Turn him out of the house," cried the baronet, addressing the man. But, with every inclination in the world to do so, the worthy groom saw something in the good, stout, well-knit limbs of the landlord of the Haldimand Arms that he did not at all like to meddle with; and, as Tom walked quietly forward with every appearance of taking his way voluntarily out of the house, the discreet servant thought it much better to allow him to do so unassisted than provoke him to resistance.

Hardly giving the man a glance, Tom walked on till he got to the side of his own gig, where the conference was still proceeding between the coachman and the under-

groom ; and there he got in and took the reins with no other salutations passing than—" Good night, Tom !" " Good night, Bob !"

" Where do you go to now, Tom ?" asked the coachman, as they drove down the avenue.

" Into the village," said Tom. " He won't do justice without being driven ; and I must find out where that blackguard Hush is, and where his trunks are hid."

" Stop at the lodge then, Tom," said the coachman.

CHAPTER XIV.

SIR WILLIAM HALDIMAND stood for an instant on the spot where Tom Notbeame had left him, still trembling with passion, but with his eyes fixed upon the carpet as if he were curiously contemplating a bunch of indescribable flowers wrought in very beautiful colours. I will not venture to look into the troublous scene within his breast, nor examine the various passions that moved him, nor trace the course along which they led thought to the point at which it arrived. Suffice it that, after that pause, he exclaimed aloud,

“I will go to her at once! I am not such a fool as to be afraid of a girl like

this. No, no ; she shall drink the dregs of the cup she has been so long brewing."

He took up one of the candles from the table, a precaution which was by no means unnecessary ; for the departure of a great part of the servants had left the usual arrangements of the house unattended to ; and none of the lamps were lighted in the hall or on the stairs.

With a quick step, Sir William Haldimand ascended to the first floor and proceeded straight to the door which Mrs. Giles had pointed out as that of Kate's dressing-room. He had the grace to knock before he entered, but hardly waited for a reply ere he went in. The chamber was called Kate's dressing-room ; but, in reality it was never used for the purposes its name implied, but, on the contrary, was fitted up, as what we should call in the present day, a *boudoir*—one of those horrible and disgusting importations from the French which are but too common in our language now. There were neat little

book-cases around, some pleasant objects of art which the fondness of Sir John Haldimand had bestowed to ornament her own quiet study, some instruments of music and some beautiful drawings. Kate herself was seated at a table writing a letter ; and it is probable that she thought the person who knocked at her door was one of the servants. At all events her eyes were filled with tears ; and she did not look up till the fall of a man's foot on the carpet caught her ear ; then, raising her eyes, she gazed at him through the bright drops. Notwithstanding her tears, she was very beautiful. Sir William Haldimand felt that she was so ; but he hated her only the more heartily. The instant she perceived him, she sprang up from her seat with a look of surprise and fear which did not add to his love ; and, gathering herself up with an air of womanly dignity, she said, "I think, sir, you must have made a mistake."

"Not at all, young woman," answered Sir William Haldimand, in a harsh, sharp

voice. "I made no mistake at all." And he gazed at her through his spectacles in a way that made the blood rush up into her cheek.

"I am sorry for it," she said. "Allow me to tell you that this is my dressing-room ; and I am not accustomed to receive strangers here."

"And allow *me* to tell *you*," replied Sir William Haldimand, "that you have no room here at all. I thought to do you a favour by coming to you rather than sending for you like one of the menial servants ; but, as you forget yourself, I must speak in a different tone. If you fancy that you are any more to enact the part here that you have so long played, you are very much mistaken.—But perhaps you do not know who I am ?"

"I should suppose, from your appearance," replied Kate, "that you were Mr. William Haldimand, were it possible for me to believe that any one bearing the name and station of a gentleman would

take advantage of a moment of profound sorrow and bereavement, to insult and triumph over a woman."

Sir William Haldimand muttered something which sounded very like, "Hussey!" but he then replied aloud, "Insult and triumph over you, poor misguided thing! I do not come for any such purpose; but merely to make a girl, who has been pampered and spoiled and led into the most ridiculous excess of vanity and ambition, understand her true situation. I even intended to suggest to you to seek as soon as possible for some situation as governess, if your education has been good enough to fit you for such an office; but from what I see of your presumption and conceit, I certainly could not recommend you to any friend even if I could forget the extravagant insolence of your cronies in the household, or their daring violation of what is right and lawful."

Kate was quite confounded by the words she heard. He, William Haldimand, come

to recommend her to seek a situation as a governess ! To taunt her with vanity and ambition ! to accuse her of presumption and conceit ! The contrast with all which she had been accustomed to through life, was too terrible and astounding for her to believe it real ; and she was utterly bewildered by what she heard till his last words led her thoughts in an instant in another direction.

“ My cronies in the household ! ” she exclaimed. “ Their extravagant insolence, and violation of what is lawful and right ! I really do not comprehend what you mean, sir. I have no cronies in my late father’s household ; and, if any one has been insolent to you, certainly it has not been with my knowledge or consent.”

“ Was not a horse stolen out of the stable this very evening and sent off to a distance by your orders, when no one has a right to remove a thing from the premises ? ” demanded Sir William Haldimand, sternly.

“ No,” answered Kate, with a look of

indignation, "nothing of the kind. My own horse was taken from the stable to carry a letter from me to one of my guardians, who, I trust, will soon be here ; but it was no horse, sir, to which you, or any one else but myself, can lay claim."

"O, I dare say," answered Sir William Haldimand, with a scoff, "a horse given by my late brother to his natural daughter ! Doubtless, if we were to take your word for *all* his gifts, Haldistow and everything it contains would be yours. But we must have better proof of such things than your assertions ; and, until proof appears you have no right to remove a single thing."

While he spoke, the colour mounted warmly into Kate's face ; but in the end she burst into tears, waving her hand with a gesture of denial.

"You are altogether wrong, sir," she said, when she could speak. "There was no such relationship between myself and Sir John Haldimand, as you insinuate. Nor was the horse his gift at all. It was

given to me by Mr. Richard Haldimand, his brother, who, thank Heaven, is living to vouch for the truth of what I say.—O, that the other lived also ! for then no one would dare to injure and insult his adopted daughter.”

“ Injure and insult, indeed ! ” exclaimed Sir William Haldimand, glad to catch at any pretext for anger. “ It is you, girl, that are insulting ; and, be assured, I will not tolerate any insolence. It was quite enough to send a brutal scoundrel to threaten and defy me in the drawing-room below, without treating me to any impertinence up here ! ”

Kate gazed at him through her tears with a look of unutterable surprise.

“ I have sent no one to menace and defy you, sir,” she said, “ and cannot conceive what you mean. No communication have I had with any one regarding you, but with the poor old housekeeper, Mrs. Giles, who came to take leave of me, and to tell me that you had discharged her and many

of the other servants, and sent them out of the house."

"Well, do you mean to deny my right to do so?" demanded Sir William Haldimand, sharply.

"I neither deny nor admit," replied Kate; "for I know nothing about it"

"I will soon see whether you admit it," said the baronet, sternly; "for I have now to tell you that you cannot remain here. You must quit this house with all convenient speed; for I will have no such tenants under my roof."

Kate gazed at him without reply; her heart beating fast, and a feeling of faint sickness coming over her which made her fear that she should fall at his feet. Sir William Haldimand would fain have had her speak; for there was nothing bitter, or fierce, or ungentlemanly, that he was not prepared to do or say, if she gave him the slightest excuse. But she remained quite silent, fearing to trust herself to utter a word. After a long and painful pause, Sir William Haldimand turned partly towards

the door, and then said, in the tone of one who strives to be moderate and forbearing,

“ You may stay till to-morrow—indeed I suppose you must do so ; but as early to-morrow as possible, I shall expect you to take your departure. Your clothes, of course, you carry with you, but nothing else, if you please. There will be an opportunity, at an after period, of ascertaining what rightfully belongs to you ; when whatever you can justly claim shall be delivered ; but, in the meantime, everything must be left of which I may have to give an account. Good night !”

Kate made no reply, but stood like one thunderstruck and bewildered. As soon, however, as he was gone, and the door closed, she sank into her seat again and wept bitterly.

“ I must finish this letter,” she exclaimed, at length, with a start. “ I must finish this letter, or I shall never have strength to do it. My brain seems turning.” And, with an eager and hasty hand, she added a few

words to her letter to Mr. Richard Haldimand, folded it up, and sealed it.

Then came the terrible thought of her own position. What was she to do ? How was she to act ? The question almost drove her mad. Was she to remain there ? Could she remain there ? Was she to stay in that house even till he turned her out ? Could she resist ? Could she struggle with him ? Where could she go for protection ? Where could she seek advice ? A thousand such inquiries pressed on her mind, and no answer came.

Vague fears, too, assailed her of she knew not what. Sir William Haldimand had looked so terrible— had spoken so fiercely ; he seemed such a demon in her eyes, she had heard such tales of his ruthless violence and his remorseless cruelty, that she dreaded to stay in the same house with him even for a night. People did not scruple to say, and the report had reached her ears, that his bad treatment had killed both his wife and daughter ; and, though she knew not what he could do to injure *her*, she felt a

dread and repugnance at the very idea of being near him, which made her tremble, actually tremble, when, after having sealed her letter, she gave herself up to thought.

“ I wish I could go to-night,” she said to herself. “ But where could I go, and how could I get there ? I wonder if any conveyance could be obtained in the village.”

She stretched out her hand and rang the bell. In a minute or two, her maid appeared in the room ; and Kate asked her eagerly if she thought there was any possibility of getting a conveyance at Haldistow to go down to Halcombe.

The girl was a good girl enough, but somewhat stupid withal ; and for an instant she stared at Kate with an air of astonishment and almost of fear.

“ The fact is, Susan,” added her mistress, “ I am anxious to go down to poor Mrs. Giles, whom Sir William Haldimand has turned out of the house. He has been here a few minutes ago, and has spoken to me so sharply and bitterly that I am unwilling to remain any longer in the same

house with him, even if he were inclined to allow me to do so, which he is not."

"Good gracious, Miss Kate!" exclaimed the girl, "he would never think to turn *you* out surely!"

"Indeed he would, Susan," replied Kate, "and has given me notice that I must go early to-morrow morning. In these circumstances, I would rather go to-night. In fact I have made up my mind; and, however painful, however terrible it may be, I will not remain under the same roof with him. All I now want is some conveyance to take me to Halcombe."

"Why not order out the chariot, Miss Kate?" asked the girl. "It would take you in three quarters of an hour."

Kate shook her head with a sad look; and the tears rose in her eyes.

"It is no longer in my power to order here," she said. "He would willingly have denied me the use of my own horse. No, Susan, I must see if I cannot get some other conveyance. A chaise, I know I cannot get without sending many miles."

“ I don’t think there is anything to be had in all Haldistow,” answered the girl. “ Mrs. Giles herself was forced to go away in a cart, miss ; and the upper-housemaid and the cook, and the others he sent away, walked on foot, some one way and some another. All their boxes are in the hall to be sent for.”

“ And why cannot I walk too ?” asked Kate, aloud. “ It is not so very far.”

“ Lord, Miss Kate !” cried the girl, “ you could never go walking all the way to Halcombe in the dark. But I’ll tell you what,” she proceeded, with a bright look, as if a new thought struck her : “ Tom Notbeame has got a gig ; and, if you could walk as far as his house, he would drive you over soon enough, and very glad to do it. He was up here not half an hour ago in his gig, if we had but known it.”

“ I will walk, I will walk there,” said Kate, eagerly. “ I suppose you will not be afraid to go with me, Susan ?”

“ O dear no, miss,” answered the girl,

“ not at all afraid to go as far as Tom Notbeame’s ; for there are always people coming and going ; and I know that John, the coachman, and Stephen, the footman, are there ; and I dare say a good many other of my fellow-servants.”

“ Well then, you must put up some clothes for me,” said Kate, thoughtfully.

“ Had I not better pack up all your things in some trunk mails, Miss Haldimand ?” asked the maid. “ We can send for them from Tom Notbeame’s ; and, if you leave them here, there’s no knowing what this man may take.”

“ No,” answered Kate. “ I will take nothing, Susan, but some necessary clothes, and some dressing things. He shall not say that I took any thing that did not belong to me. One or other of my guardians must soon be here ; and every thing that is really mine I shall have. Make up a little parcel which you or I can carry, and let us set out as soon as possible.”

Her orders were obeyed promptly enough,

though the girl put up many things that were not likely to be wanted, and omitted many that were. But Kate in the meantime took one of the lights from the table, and quitted the room for a few minutes, leaving the door partly open behind her ; for she had a dread of Sir William Haldimand, which she could not conquer. The girl paused in her work, and listened ; and she heard the door of the room, in which the body of Sir John Haldimand lay, open and shut. After a few minutes' absence, Kate returned ; and the maid saw that she had been weeping.

All was at length prepared. Extinguishing the lights, as soon as the maid had got her own bonnet and cloak, and any little articles she needed, Kate went forth from her room with a quiet step, along the corridor and down the stairs. She was turning to the right at the bottom, to go out at the great hall door, and could already hear the heavy step of Sir William Haldimand pacing up and down

the drawing-room, when the maid whispered, in a low, trembling tone,

“ Better go out, Miss Kate, by the little door between the housekeeper’s room and the still-room. If we go that way, he may catch us.”

Kate followed the suggestion ; and in a minute more they were both in the Park. They took their way down the avenue, till it was crossed by the path which led by the stone stile over the low wall to the fields beyond ; and Kate, turning to the right, as that path was much the shortest, had nearly reached the wall, when the maid suggested a matter which had entirely escaped her attention.

“ If Mr. Richard Haldimand should come back, Miss Kate,” she said, “ and there’s no saying what may happen, you know, how will he know where to find you ? Had I not better go back to the house, and say that we are gone to Halcombe ?”

“ Not to the house, not to the house,”

said Kate. "The best way will be to tell the people at the lodge. Go round that way, Susan, and tell them. I will go across the meadow; and you can soon overtake me on the road. I will walk slowly."

Kate *did* walk slowly; for she was oppressed with very heavy thoughts. The serene beauty of the night, with the heavens full of stars, and just tinged in the east with the sweet, soft light of the rising moon, served but to render her more forlorn. The heart makes strange metamorphoses of external things. When happy, it can transmute gloom into radiance: when sad, it converts radiance into gloom. Dark and painful, and sorrowful, were Kate's imaginings. She cast her eyes back over the past—the happy, happy past; and she pondered on the changes which two brief years had wrought. Of the many who had loved her and guarded her, like a precious gem, from every evil, none was near her now to shelter or protect her.

One had been swept away by a fatal accident ; one had bowed to the stern law of nature ; one, wounded and sick, was even then wandering homeward over the dark seas ; one, sorrowing for the loved companion of his life, had gone with an anxious heart to meet the son, in whom his deepest affections rested ; and she, loved of them all, was walking through the well-remembered scenes where their presence had so lately shed joy around her, a sorrowing outcast without home or comforter.

She walked on. Deeper and deeper she plunged into the well-springs of thought which were opened around her, springs but seldom unsealed for those of her age. Hitherto the pleasant aspect of the world, the gilding upon the external surface, had hidden the rough material from her sight. Like many who are lapped in soft prosperity, she had never entered profoundly into any of the mysteries of life. Human existence for the prosperous, like the fields and meadows in a bright summer's day, is

covered by a golden network of gossamers ; and her eye had never been called to penetrate beneath the glittering surface. But now she seemed awakened to a new existence ; a blast had blown over the prospect, and swept away the shining web that covered it. She felt herself standing in the midst of things unknown ; and she asked herself many a question of their nature and their quality. Strange, strange universe, full of beauty and excellence, and joy and happiness, and deformity, and evil, and misery, and sorrow : a texture of golden threads woven through a black and rugged warp ! She had seen only the fair side ; and now, when the darker was presented to her eyes, what thoughts did it not arouse ! One of the ever-recurring questions—one which startles us the most—which staggers and alarms the inexperienced, but from which the mind, like a bee drawing honey from bitter herbs can extract consolation, and hope, and strength, presented itself more frequently,

more strongly, than any other. Why are the good stricken down and the evil left? Why are the virtuous visited with sorrow, and with pain, and with adversity, while the wicked revel in prosperity, in delight and ease? Her faith was not shaken: her trust, her confidence, did not abandon her; but she felt somewhat bewildered; and thought, deep thought, took possession of her entirely, silenced even grief, though grief was still present, and dulled the external senses by the intensity of the mind's working within.

She walked on—faster perhaps than she imagined—through the meadow, down the road. She perceived not, at least she heeded not, the fact of the maid not having overtaken her till she was within a quarter of a mile of the spot where the river flowed into the Mere. Even then it did not alarm nor much surprise her.

“She has staid a little, I dare say, to talk with the people at the lodge,” Kate

said to herself; "and I have walked faster than I intended. She will come presently."

With a slower step, she went quietly on, looking up at the stars fading away in the light of the now risen moon; and the stars always speak consolation to us, if we will ask it. There is a voice of hope in them. They utter the same great word that is whispered by all Nature; but they utter it in a clearer and grander tone. They say, "TRUST!" And Kate *did* trust.

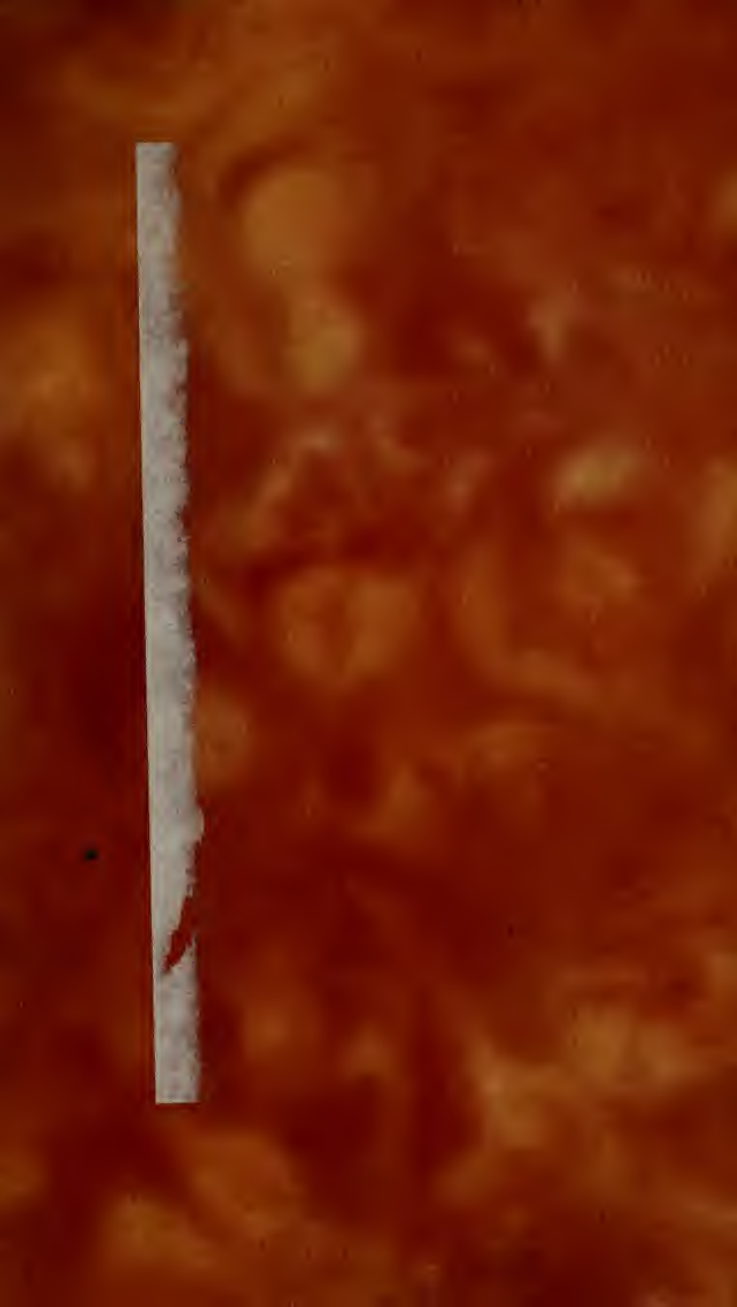
She walked on. She passed the spot where the cascade had lately been formed by the fall of the bank. She approached the house of Tom Notbeame, now really surprised, and rendered somewhat anxious, by the girl's delay. She thought, however —

"I will go in and talk to the woman of the house till she comes; and Notbeame can be getting the chaise ready in the meanwhile."

But when she came near the house, much light was streaming out from the windows;

and she heard men's voices talking loudly and busily within. She could not make up her mind to enter. There was something painful, terrible in the thought ; and she drew back with a stronger feeling of loneliness and friendlessness than ever she had known in life before. Slowly she turned her steps towards the edge of the Mere. at a spot where she would be able to see the girl when she came down the road ; and there she stood, gazing upon the waters glistening in the moonlight, where, just twenty years before, her mother had stood and gazed upon the same waters, bright and calm as they were now.

END OF VOL. II.



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